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UK customer service team: 01959 543 747
Customer service email address:
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Lance Stroll's Aston Martin
AMR22 at this year's Bel-
gium Grand Prix



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

I WAS lucky enough to attend the Belgian Grand Prix in late August 2022, my first since Aston Martin returned to Formula One as a constructor in 2021. Although, as you'll read in Matt James' motorsport feature on page 84, the results over the past two years haven't been great, I was pleased to witness how many spectators still supported the team with the circuit's safety fence lined with fluttering green flags. Yet it's not just on the continent where the team receives this kind of reverence.

Aston Martin might be reasonably new to the sport, but with its famous winged logo – first seen in 1927 – adorning some of the most famous and beautiful cars ever built, it has become one of the few genuinely iconic car brands.

So, whether it's the magnificent Virage 5.3 we feature on page 14, the bonkers Valkyrie AMR Pro on p48, AMD's newly purchased DB7 3.2 that we take to the Yorkshire Dales on p74, or AMR22 that German driver, Sebastian Vettel, used to finish eighth at the Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps, they all share the same long and distinguished heritage.

Hopefully it won't take long for Aston Martin F1 to discover its long-promised form and finally win a race. Yet no matter how long success takes, it won't diminish the support shown on all four corners of the globe for this historic and important manufacturer.



Paul Walton Editor

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In 1977 and 1979, British driver, Robin Hamilton, entered his independently developed DBS into the 24-Hours of Le Mans



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UP FRONT NEWS



Vantage Roadster revealed



Aston Martin has debuted the new V12 Vantage Roadster, an ultra-exclusive production model that will be limited to just 249 customer examples globally. With all examples sold ahead of release, the V12 Vantage Roadster boasts a compelling combination of dramatic widebody design, ground-hugging wide-track suspension and – for the first time in a Vantage Roadster – the mighty 5.2-litre twin-turbo V12 engine.

Said Roberto Fedeli, Aston Martin's chief technical officer, "We have worked extremely hard to ensure the V12 Vantage Roadster possesses the same potency and dynamism that characterises the V12 Vantage, while surpassing it in terms of raw sensory excitement that you only achieve with roof down driving. With more power and torque than any Vantage Roadster before it, a wide-track chassis with precisely tuned suspension calibration, and up to ten times the downforce of the series production Vantage Roadster, this is a breathtaking machine created for our most enthusiastic customers".

Developing 700PS (690bhp) at 6,500rpm and 542 lb ft of torque at 5,500rpm and a power-to-weight ratio of 372PS-per-ton, the V12 Roadster can accelerate from rest to 60mph in just 3.5 seconds and has a top speed of 200mph.

The transmission is a ZF eight-speed automatic that's joined to a mechanical limited-slip differential (LSD) mounted at the rear. The suspension is the same as the V12 Vantage, but features a bespoke tune for its adaptive dampers.

Also, like the V12 Vantage, the V12 Vantage Roadster features powerful carbon ceramic brakes (CCB) as standard. Measuring 410mm x 38mm, the front discs are gripped by six-piston calipers, while the 360mm x 32mm rear discs are paired with four-piston calipers. With much increased stopping power and tremendous resistance to brake fade at high temperatures, the CCB technology reduces unsprung weight by 23kg when compared to steel brakes, benefitting steering response and ride quality.

In order to further reduce overall mass, the V12 Vantage Roadster's front bumper, clamshell bonnet, front fenders and side sills are made from carbon fibre, with the rear bumper and deck lid made from weight-saving composite material. Additional savings have been made with the adoption of a lightweight battery and a special centre-mounted twin-exit exhaust



ASTON TAKES IMSA CROWN



system fabricated from lightweight 1mm stainless steel. Tuned to ensure the V12 Vantage Roadster has a rousing voice to match its looks, this new system weighs 7.2kg less than the Vantage Roadster's exhaust.

Finally, Marek Reichman, Aston Martin's chief creative officer, added, "From a design perspective, V12 Vantage Roadster is a combination of living sculpture and physiology, such as the functions of an elite runner or thoroughbred racehorse. On one hand, much like the way their systems are developed to handle the stresses of peak performance and trained to work together to increase efficiency and power using oxygen, V12 Vantage Roadster was designed to maximise the benefits of airflow into, throughout and around the car. For drivers, we created this explicit open-top sports car for those craving excitement and drama. The platform presented us with a design opportunity to make a contemporary visual statement of intent. The result is a living, breathing, driving sculpture with a level of control that sits at the fingertips."

Deliveries of the V12 Vantage Roadster are scheduled to begin during late 2022.



In a tense 25th Annual Motul Petit Le Mans 10-Hour finale at Road Atlanta in Georgia, USA, Aston Martin's Seattle-based partner team, The Heart of Racing, and 21-year-old Roman De Angelis have clinched the GTD Class Drivers' and Teams' titles of the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship.

The result marks the first time the British brand has won an overall championship in IMSA. Yet The Heart of Racing Team was made to fight hard for its first overall title; indeed the result wasn't secured until the chequered flag fell on a spectacular season.

The number 27 Heart of Racing Aston Martin Vantage GT3, driven by De Angelis, Maxime Martin (BEL) and team principal Ian James (GBR) started the race with a slender 48-point lead over the Team Korthoff Mercedes with 350 points available; the 27 crew focusing on being in the mix come nightfall. But the tension ratcheted up when they encountered a small technical issue around half distance, which required a steering wheel change that dropped them off the lead lap and down to the fringes of the top ten.

But after that the Aston Martin ran faultlessly, and in the seventh hour the team's persistence was rewarded when Team Korthoff ran into technical issues of its own. It was then a matter of staying

close enough to the Wright Motorsports Porsche (which then became the team's principal rival) to maintain a points cushion; which thanks to the 27 Vantage's seventh-place finish following a last stint charge from Martin, was a margin of 23 points in the end.

For De Angelis, who was named the 2021 Aston Martin Racing Driver Academy graduate at the beginning of this year, the title capped a superb season in which he was supported for the most part by Belgian ace Martin. The Teams' Championship, meanwhile, was a just reward for a stellar campaign by The Heart of Racing Team, which recorded two GTD class wins and three podiums from the final seven rounds of the 11-race season.

Huw Tasker, head of AMR partner racing, said, "Having competed at the forefront of every important GT3 Championship around the world this year, our partner The Heart of Racing Team has taken the Vantage GT3 to its most prestigious title yet and one that demonstrates beyond doubt that the car can win in the most competitive environments. It is all the more satisfying that the victory was in the hands of aspiring young talent nurtured from within the ranks of the Aston Martin Racing partner network. This is an incredibly proud day for everyone at Aston Martin Racing."

DB5 STUNT CAR AUCTIONEED

An Aston Martin DB5 replica stunt car featured in the recent James Bond film, *No Time To Die*, has raised £2,922,000 for good causes in a recent charity auction at Christie's to celebrate 60 years of the James Bond films.

One of three special Aston Martin models included in the multi-million-pound charity auction, the replica DB5 donated by Aston Martin Lagonda was the star lot on the night, accelerating beyond the auctioneer's estimate before being sold to a telephone bidder.

This stunt car is one of eight exclusively built and engineered by Aston Martin for *No Time To Die*, with each car uniquely modified for their individual roles on screen. The replica stunt DB5 car, sold at Christie's, features operational gadgets including a rotating digital numberplate, retractable headlights, pop-out machine guns and firing prop bomblets.

In the film, the DB5 features in a thrilling opening chase sequence, driven by James Bond (Daniel Craig), with Madeleine Swann (Léa Seydoux) at his side, through Matera, Italy. The car demonstrates its incredible dynamic capabilities as the pair drive at high speed through the town to shake off their pursuers before Bond deploys the hidden machine guns.

The proceeds of the DB5 auction will benefit The Prince's Trust in its work with young people; The Prince of Wales's Charitable Fund in support of charities assisting serving and former members of



the UK Intelligence Agencies; and three charities supporting serving and former members of the UK Special Forces.

Marek Reichman, executive vice president and chief creative officer of Aston Martin said, "Aston Martin is incredibly proud to be part of James Bond's DNA and we are delighted to celebrate this 60th anniversary with the sale of a truly unique Aston Martin model that we created for *No Time To Die*. It is fantastic that the sale of this special car will now hugely benefit several good causes which are close to our heart, playing our own part in the long-standing tradition of the James Bond franchise supporting charitable causes."

The auction also saw the sale of a 1981 Aston Martin V8, which was driven by Daniel Craig in *No Time To Die*. The iconic model is similar to that used in the 1987 Bond film, *The Living Daylights*.

Donated by EON Productions, the Aston Martin V8 fetched £630,000 to support the work of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency.

The auction also saw the sale of an Aston Martin DBS Superleggera 007 Edition, one of 25 examples created by Aston Martin to celebrate the car's inclusion in *No Time To Die*. Featuring a unique plaque with etched signatures from producers Michael G. Wilson and Barbara Broccoli and actor Lashana Lynch, who drove the same Aston Martin model as Nomi in the film, the car raised £403,200 to support the Royal Foundation of The Prince and Princess of Wales.





ASTON MARTIN
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


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DBR22 WINS CONCOURS

The Aston Martin DBR22 design concept we showed in the previous issue of *AMD* was declared Best of Show at the Chantilly Arts & Elegance, 45km north of Paris, claiming the event's coveted Concours d'Élégance Award.

Awarded by jury members Anne Asensio (design experience vice president at Dassault Systems), Cyril Duval (Le Point Group counsellor) and Michael Bock (former head of Mercedes-Benz-classic), the blue riband Best of Show Concours d'Élégance title reflects the Aston Martin design concept's immediate and significant impact on the luxury car world.

The win is the first for Aston Martin since the inception of this Concours d'Élégance in 2014 and represents a major achievement for the historic British marque.

Marek Reichman, executive vice president and chief creative officer at Aston Martin said, "Winning the Chantilly Concours d'Élégance for the first time

with our DBR22 design concept is, without doubt, a special honour for Aston Martin. "What was important to us in the design of DBR22 was to express a future in the here and now. The jury have clearly recognised our efforts to evolve the surfaces, proportions and shapes and to break new ground with this car.

"By combining advanced processes, technologies and materials, we have succeeded in modernising our racing line and creating a new pedigree. The DBR22 is a hot-blooded, thoroughbred Aston Martin sports car full of speed, agility and temperament that we believe will form the basis for our icons of tomorrow."



DB4 GT ZAGATO WINS CONCOURS OF ELEGANCE

A rare DB4 GT Zagato won the hotly contested Sixties category of the Concours of Elegance held at Hampton Court Palace between 2-4 September 2022.

Combining the proven, high-performance DB4 GT mechanicals with a stunningly stylish – and light – aluminium body by Italian coachbuilding house Zagato – the DB4 GT Zagato represented the best of all worlds; the ultimate Sixties road and racing Aston Martin.

The winning car, chassis number 1093/R, was the third of the MP209 'ultra-lightweight' motorsport-orientated examples, finished in the arresting hue of French Racing Blue. Built in 1962, the lightened special was delivered new to committed Aston Martin enthusiast and racer Jean Kerguen and raced at Le Mans, where the 3.7-litre straight-six powered



machine could hit 170mph on the Mulsanne Straight.

Another special Aston Martin on display, the DB6 Volante owned by the-then HRH Prince of Wales, now His Majesty King Charles III, was awarded the Platinum Jubilee Award, a decade on from its first appearance at the Concours of Elegance in 2012.

A 21st birthday from HM Queen Elizabeth II and finished in the striking hue of Seychelles Blue, His Majesty has cherished the car ever since.





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V8 Vantage (2005 - 2018)	£705	£740	£705	£740	£825	£740	£705	£740	£705	£895
DB9, Rapide, DBS (2007 - 2014), V12 Vantage (2010-2018)	£805	£840	£805	£840	£920	£840	£805	£840	£805	£990

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MODEL PROFILE

VIRAGE 5.3

VIRAGE 5.3

MYSTERY MACHINE



Due to its more modern, angular design, the original Virage from 1988 has never gained the popularity of the earlier DB and V8 models despite being Aston Martin's last genuinely handcrafted car. We look at the history of one of the most underappreciated sports cars from the last four decades before trying an early example

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL WALTON



“THAT’S VERY pretty,” said a random stranger as he walked past the green car seen here. “What is it?”

These few words perfectly sum up how the majority view the Aston Martin Virage. Despite coming from one of the world’s most famous automobile manufacturers with a lineage that’s second to none, the car isn’t as widely recognised as other members of its immediate family.

Yet in my opinion, the Virage is Aston’s most distinctive model from the last 40 years with a fascinating and unique history.

By the mid-Eighties, Aston Martin was in desperate need of a new car. Although still pretty, the existing V8 range was simply a facelift of the DBS from 1967 and although it had received several updates throughout the Seventies – including the introduction of the fast Vantage model in 1977 – it was clearly outclassed compared to newer rivals such as the BMW 6-Series, Ferrari Mondial and the Porsche 928. As a result, production had reduced to a dribble which, considering the Newport Pagnell factory made just four cars a week (the same time it took

Ferrari to make 50), was a real worry for Victor Gauntlett who had taken over as chairman in 1981.

And so, in 1986, he instigated a replacement that would take the company into the next decade. Internally designated DP 2034, as a front-engined, rear-wheel-drive coupe, the new car wouldn’t break any new ground while the interior would feature the kind of luxury Aston’s customers had grown to expect. It would also use the company’s trusty Tadek Marek-designed 5.3-litre V8 but it would need to be compatible with lead-free petrol and able to meet UK and American emission laws yet without losing performance.

To achieve this, it was clear that four valves per cylinder was the obvious route. After looking at the cost and the development time, the job of developing the engine was awarded to Callaway Engineering based in Connecticut in the US.

Work started on the four-valve conversion in April 1986, finishing 18 months later. The power of the modified engine was quoted at 326bhp with 365 lb ft of torque compared to 305bhp/340 lb ft of the Series V V8 saloon.





“The goal for the production engine,” explained Reeves Callaway in Paul Chudecki’s 1990 book, *Aston Martin and Lagonda Volume 2: V8 models from 1970*, “was to design, execute and prove the initial durability of the four-valve configuration and there, essentially, our responsibility ended. Aston’s responsibility then started with the finalising for production of all the ancillaries and, most importantly, all the engine management system to comply with the required standards.”

There were also revisions to the cooling system and a new engine management system was devised using Weber-Marelli electronic fuel injection. A new intake manifold design was also developed.

Gauntlett originally wanted the car to have a new chassis but due to needing to rationalise components to increase production, a shortened Lagonda steel platform was used instead.

In May 1986, Aston’s chairman approached five design studios to submit a design for the car including William Towns who had been responsible for the original DBS and Lagonda saloon. He gave them just four months until August to produce a quarter-scale model of their ideas. ▶



MODEL PROFILE

VIRAGE 5.3



The designs were then put on display in the Service Department at Newport Pagnell and a mixed jury of executives, dealers, customers and others were asked to vote for their favourite. In October, the contract was eventually awarded to two Royal College of Art tutors, John Heffernan and Ken Greenley, who had previously designed the Panther Solo and the Bentley Continental R.

Said Heffernan during a 2018 interview, "Victor Gauntlett phoned Ken and said 'Right, you've done a Panther, you've done a Bentley – you're probably about right for us now.' Very laconic, was Victor. The brief was to replace Bill Towns' DBS, which I'd always liked a lot, but it had stopped selling." Heffernan went on to say the shortened

Lagonda chassis had a huge impact on the design, since the retention of its boxy bumper infrastructure dictated a less rounded platform than he originally desired.

To save time, the design went from quarter-scale to full-size model in one hit although there was extensive small-scale testing in Southampton University's wind tunnel. This soon showed the tail needed to be higher to negate rear lift.

The original design also featured pop-up headlights, but due to Aston's previously poor experience with these on the Lagonda saloon they were soon substituted for fixed headlights, sourced from the Audi 200 saloon. The rear light clusters were VW Scirocco while the indicators were Porsche 928.



TECH SPEC

Engine: 5341cc V8

Power: 326bhp

Torque: 365 lb ft

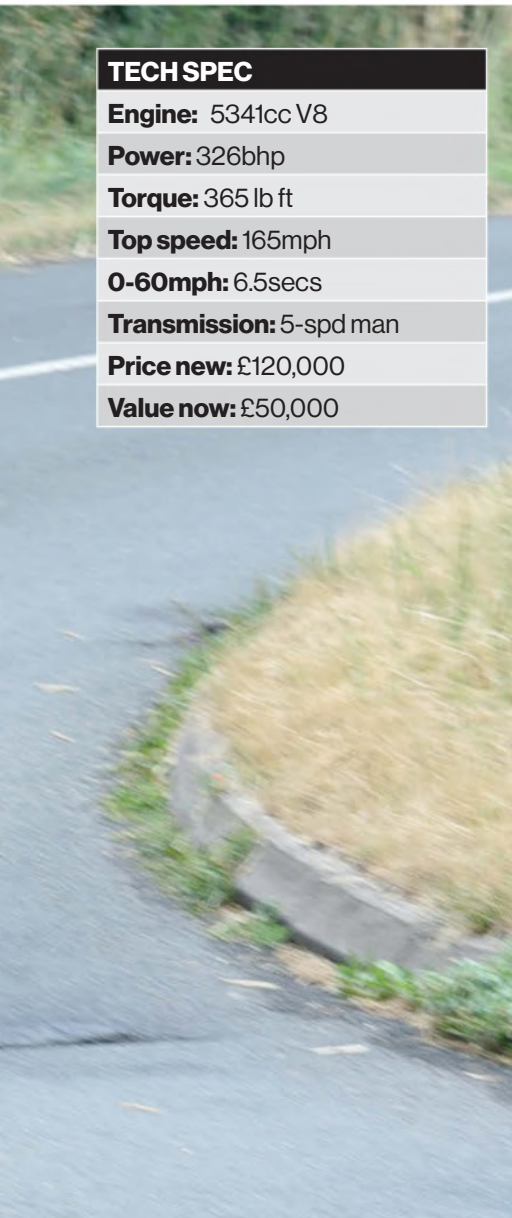
Top speed: 165mph

0-60mph: 6.5secs

Transmission: 5-spd man

Price new: £120,000

Value now: £50,000



The body was made from hand-formed aluminium panels. Suspension was via all new double wishbones at the front and a cast aluminium De Dion rear axle located by triangulated radius rods and a Watts linkage. Bilstein dampers were developed especially for the car.

By being longer, wider and having much crisper, angular lines, the new model was very different from the outgoing V8. Yet neither did it push the boundaries of car design and, thanks to the famous grille and overall proportions, was still clearly an Aston Martin.

"It was important that, although new in virtually every way, the Virage was of evolutionary rather than revolutionary design," said Gauntlett in the January 1989 issue of *Road & Track*. "It has to be a car that could stand in line with every post-war Aston Martin and be the self-evident successor to that tradition."

Continued Heffernan in 2018, "It was meant to be a conservative car; it wasn't sensational. A lot of the English

magazines were critical of Aston building a front-engined car when the Italians had gone mid-engined. Now 30 years later, Ferrari is still coming out with lovely front-engined designs."

For the name, Victor Gauntlett wanted one that started with a V to match Vantage and Volante, finally deciding Virage from the French for curve.

The car debuted at the 1988 British Motor Show at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham.

"I am very proud that the job of unveiling this new car has fallen to me," said a beaming Gauntlett to the assembled crowd. "We have a vision that the best days of Aston are yet to come. The Virage is a car worthy of a great past and an exciting future."

The show's visitors were clearly impressed by the new car, since by the end of it, 144 customers had ordered one, paying a £20k deposit to do so.

Aston was also proud it had two examples of the Virage on its show stand,

MODEL PROFILE

VIRAGE 5.3





one silver and the other in metallic green. "If you've only got one, it's a show car," said the car's co-designer, Ken Greenley, to *Autocar* magazine for its October 26, 1988 issue. "Two cars give you credibility – there's a production line at work." This was overly confident, though, since the cars on display were two of the five prototypes that Aston Martin's engineers had produced since April 1987 to develop the Virage. Due to several last minute issues, the first production examples weren't delivered to their owners until January 1990.

With the Virage's debut coming a year after Ford had taken a major stake in the company, Gauntlett had acknowledged the American giant's hands-off approach during the latter stages of the car's development.

"We wanted to give for money to Ford who had been as good as their word, with no nasty thoughts about badge engineering. And I think it's important to mention Ford. I want them to see the Aston and think jolly good show." Ford obviously did, since it bought the company outright five years later.

When journalists finally got to drive the car 18 months later, they too were impressed by the Virage. "The new car outperforms the old in every respect," said *Sports Car International* in its September 1990 issue. "Its quicker, sharper handling, more refined and has an astonishingly good ride. It's better made too. The factory's craftsmanship is legendary but now it's allied to Nineties standards of quality and reliability."

Impressive words but they needed to be, since initially at £120,000 in the UK (later increasing to £135k), the Virage was more expensive than the Bentley Turbo R, Ferrari Testarossa and Lamborghini Countach. Unsurprisingly, the car was never a huge seller and just 411 coupes (which include 80 examples of the Vantage 6.3 from 1993) and 233 Volantes (which had arrived in 1992) were produced, before the car was replaced by the slightly updated but otherwise identical V8 Coupe in 1996.

It's because of these low numbers plus the introduction of the DB7 in 1994 that the Virage has always been overlooked. Not only at £80k was the newer car more

MODEL PROFILE

VIRAGE 5.3

affordable and therefore produced in greater numbers (around 7,000), but it featured the sort of smooth, curvaceous lines that were more in keeping with the brand. It might have started life as a Jaguar project [see AMD issue 4, p32] and lacked the handcrafted appeal of its larger sibling but it arguably looked more of an Aston than the Virage.

But over four decades since the car's debut, is that still the case? Or should the Virage finally be appreciated for the proper, big-engined Aston it always has been?

This Balmoral Green example I've arranged to drive to try and prove this is a perfect example of the breed. Registered in January 1990, it's one of the earliest produced yet remains immaculate.

The sharper, crisper, more angular lines might be very different from every Aston that came before or after it, but, together with Virage's sizeable dimensions, they result in a big, bold and imposing car. As *Performance Car magazine* said in its April 1990 issue, "It really does look sensational in the flesh: big and solid looking, ultra-smooth and finely integrated."

Yet there are similarities with Aston's older models that go beyond the familiar shape of the grille if you look for them.

Take the rear window for example; the way it tapers towards the bootlid becoming much narrower than the wings reminds me of the DB4 Series V that I tested in the previous issue (p66).

Unlike Aston's later cars that were mass produced at the current Gaydon factory, the Virage was one of the last to be handmade at Newport Pagnell. As a result, the shut lines are inch perfect and when I climb inside, the door shuts with a solid, mechanical click.

And although the flat-fronted dashboard is surprisingly simple, featuring ordinary-looking plastic switchgear sourced from a manufacturer of lesser cars, the interior still has all the luxury of an exclusive gentleman's club. The soft Connolly leather has been perfectly handstitched while the yards of thick walnut veneer across the fascia make it look and feel like a piece of Queen Anne furniture.

Due to the car's dimensions, there's plenty of interior room allowing for large, armchair-like seats, plus when owner James Richardson gets in beside me there's so much space between us you could park a Mini in the gap.

According to a small brass plaque on one of the cam covers, the V8 was

built by Aston employee Mike Peach. Not something you'd get from a mass-produced Jaguar or Porsche, it further adds to the car's image of being a low-volume, handmade sports car.

When I turn the key in the ignition, the 5.3-litre erupts immediately into life with a baritone yet not overly obtrusive gravelly note. This example has a ZF five-speed manual gearbox that was fitted to around 40 percent of the cars produced, the majority having Chrysler's four-speed TorqueFlite transmission, which was replaced with a four-speed unit in 1993.

Despite the car's hairy-chested, masculine image, I'm surprised by both how light the clutch is and how the gearlever guides smoothly into first. With an empty road ahead, I give the throttle pedal a proper shove resulting in a sudden and hard surge of power, the free-revving V8 needing little persuasion to deliver its 326bhp. Although the 0-60mph time of six seconds is slow by today's supercars – no doubt partially caused by the car weighing a hefty 1,973kg (4,349lb), around 238kg (525lb) more than a Jaguar XJ-S V12 – the V8 always feels strong, gutsy and is happy to be revved hard. Plus, the growing noise from that Mike Peach- ►





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MODEL PROFILE

VIRAGE 5.3

built V8, further adds to the experience that cars like the XJ-S with its whisper-quiet V12 miss out on.

Although the physical throws between each gear are longer than the M1 motorway, with the ZF 'box not feeling notchy or vague, as I quickly approach a corner I'm still able to flick the lever down into third relatively smoothly.

Body roll has been largely kept in check meaning fast corners don't unsettle the car and there's little worry of losing the rear on this dry autumnal day, but I'm still always aware of the car's bulk. A fast change of direction or becoming overly confident could end messily.

With reasonably accurate steering and close to 50/50 weight distribution, I'm able to balance the throttle at a high speed through the bend before nailing it on the exit. With so much torque at my disposal, the V8 again responds instantly, rewarding me with another hard burst of acceleration.

Yet what strikes me most about the car isn't the power or the performance but how civilised it is compared to the previous V8 model. Easy to drive, relatively refined and with supple suspension that makes light work of any imperfections in the road, clearly it's more of a grand tourer than a pure sports car. The poor 15mpg fuel economy aside, I could imagine cruising down to the French Riviera in ultimate luxury.

Why, then, has the car been so overlooked since the day production of its updated replacement, the almost identical V8 Coupe, finished in 2000? I reckon the more angular design doesn't help, arguably lacking the classic lines of the V8 that preceded it or the perfect proportions of the Vanquish that came after.

Plus – and in the Aston Martin world, this is important – it was never driven by James Bond, the secret agent preferring

BMW's when the Virage and V8 Coupe were in production during the Nineties. This meant the car never had the exposure of its more famous siblings, never becoming part of British culture like the DB5 is now.

As a result, a Virage 5.3 coupe like the one featured can still be bought for around £50,000, around £25k less than what a Vanquish is currently worth.

I'm sure over time that will change; the car is too memorable and its heritage too strong for it to be overlooked forever. But until that happens, this handsome, powerful and distinctive sports car will remain Aston Martin's mystery machine. **AMD**

Thanks to: the car's owner, James Richardson, and the AMOC for finding it (www.amoc.org)

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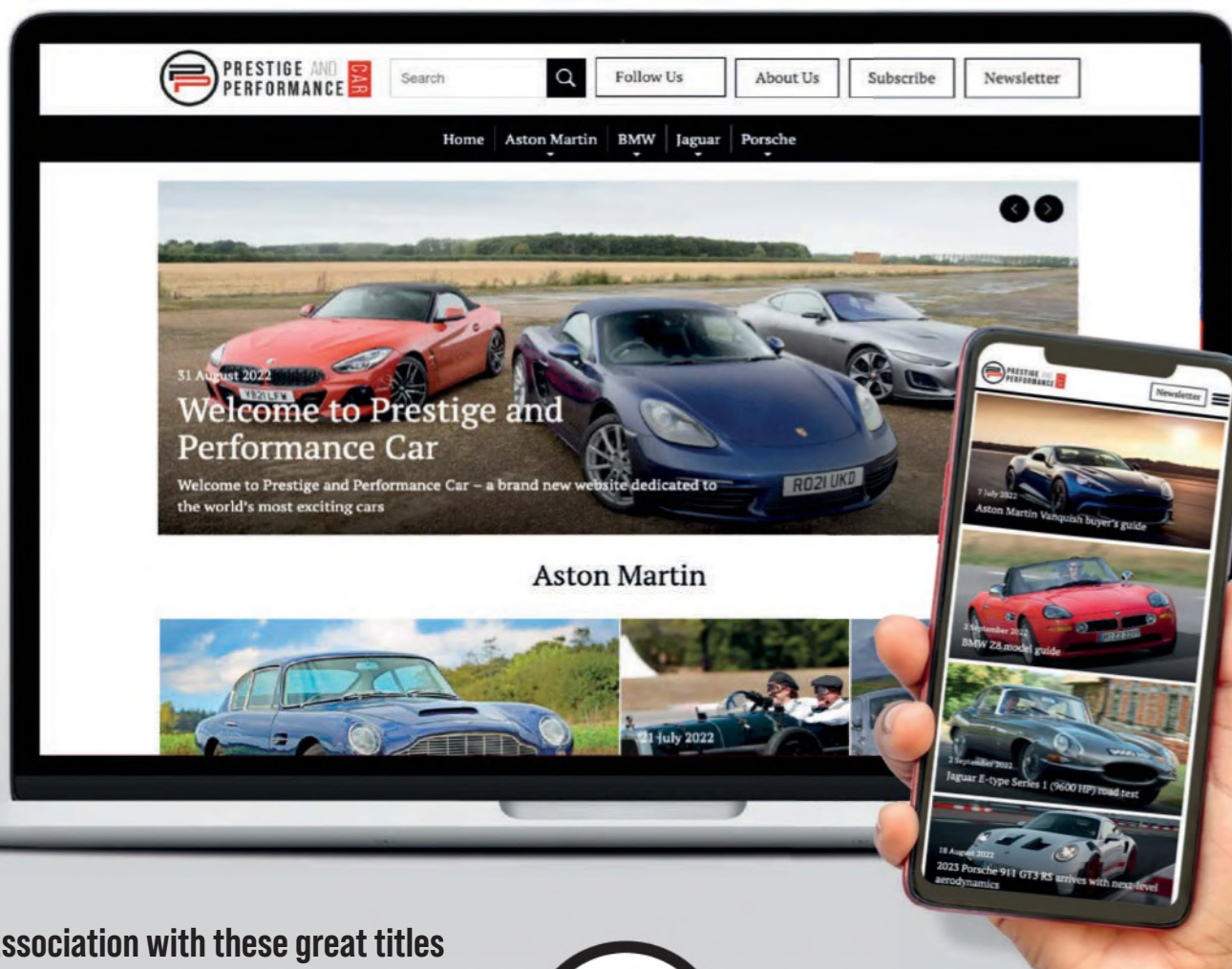
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SHOW CASE

This 2.6 drophead coupe was displayed at the 1948 Earls Court Motor Show and later used for the company's marketing material. Considered today to be the oldest surviving Aston Martin or Lagonda from the David Brown era, we look at the fascinating history of this important car

WORDS PAUL WALTON PHOTOGRAPHY GREGORY OWAIN



THE 1948 Earls Court Motor Show is one of the most important in the history of the UK's post-war car industry.

Coming just three years after the end of the war, it was where three British automotive icons, the Land Rover, Jaguar XK 120 and Morris Minor, all made their public debuts.

Yet away from the bright lights and razzmatazz of these motoring goliaths another homegrown marque, Lagonda, was revealing its own model, the 2.6. Powered by an all-new straight-six engine

and the first car to come under David Brown's ownership, it's no exaggeration to say that the future of the company rested on the success of this handsome model.

Incredibly, one of the cars displayed at Earls Court, a green drophead coupe, survives. Once used by Lagonda for a variety of purposes, including for its advertising and marketing material, we take a look at the fascinating history of this significant car.

Work to develop what became known as the 2.6 had started during the latter stages of the second world war. Designed

by famed engineer, W.O. Bentley, it featured a new chassis and a 2,580cc straight-six engine. Although at least five prototypes had been built, by the mid-Forties it was clear Lagonda wasn't in a position financially to put the car into production and so in 1947 the company was offered for sale. It was eventually bought in September the same year by British engineering magnate, (Sir) David Brown, who later admitted he only did so when he realised the 2.6-litre would be perfect for his other recent purchase, Aston Martin. ►

HISTORY

LAGONDA 2.6

“When I tried one of the prototypes, I immediately thought we could do with that engine,” said Brown in Geoff Courtney’s 1978 book, *The Power Behind Aston Martin*. “You see, Claude Hill [Aston Martin’s chief engineer] already had the idea of developing a six-cylinder engine from his 2.0-litre four-cylinder, but I’d told him we couldn’t afford to put it into production.”

Since the sale didn’t include Lagonda’s Staines factory, the prototypes and all relevant parts were transported down the road to Aston’s new facility in Feltham and built into complete cars. Chassis number five was one of these and it was soon made into the second production version of the 2.6 drophead coupe.

Originally stamped CH NO 5 on the chassis, when Brown took over, a new bulkhead plate that followed Aston Martin’s own new numbering system





changed this to LAG/48/5. It was finally registered on 7 April 1948, as SMX10. And three quarters of a century later, it still is.

The car was soon used by Lagonda's marketing department and for the next two years was often seen, complete with its distinctive numberplate, in magazine adverts and sales brochures.

In June, SMX10 was one of two examples of the 2.6 that were taken to the continent for endurance testing by company engineer, Percy Kermish, plus journalist Rodney Walkerley, who would later write about his experiences in the 14 July 1948 issue of *The Motor* magazine.

The journey included the long and straight autoroute near Jabekke in Belgium where they recorded a top speed of 90mph, 0-60mph in 17.6 seconds and the standing quarter mile in 21.7 seconds. Walkerley found the figures impressive for a 1,525kg car and was even more impressed by the engine's flexibility, which



“Although relative minnows when compared to the other manufacturers that were debuting cars, this was still an important moment for the two companies”



The drophead coupe was used for Lagonda's advertising including this from the October 27 1948 issue of The Motor



An advert from the November 1948 issue of Motorsport shows two of the cars that will be displayed at Earls Court including SMX10



ABOVE: Aston Martin Lagonda's stand at the 1948 Earls Court Motor Show reveals SMX10 behind a 2.6 saloon and 2-Litre Sports
LEFT: SMX10 was also clearly shown on the front cover of Lagonda's brochure for the 2.6 model from 1948





gave a 50-70mph acceleration time of 12 seconds in third. "No car which has yet been through our hands has equalled the post-war Lagonda in combining superb comfort, particularly in the rear seats, with stability and good handling," he wrote. "The ride over rough roads was superior to that achieved in any other car of our experience and on the Belgian pavé the occupants of the rear seat could write notes and read small print with no difficulty at 70mph."

Between 27 October and 6 November of the same year, SMX10 was then displayed on Lagonda's stand at the Earls Court Motor Show alongside a 2.6 saloon and an Aston Martin 2-Litre Sports. Although relative minnows when compared to the other manufacturers that were debuting cars, this was still an important moment for the two companies.

In its October 1948 issue, *Motorsport* described the new car as, "technically

exciting by reason of independent suspension of all four wheels, with inboard location of the rear brakes and of notably dignified appearance."

When Aston Martin returned to the Le Mans 24 Hour race in 1949 (the first since the war had ended) with three early examples of the not-yet-launched DB2, David Brown hired his friend S.C.H. 'Sammy' Davis to oversee the operation. One of the famed 'Bentley Boys' who had raced the British marque during the late Twenties, he's perhaps best known for winning Le Mans in 1927 with a 3.0-litre despite crashing at the famous Maison Blanche (White House) section when the chassis became twisted.

Davis was loaned SMX10 for the 1949 race, describing the journey in the 5 August issue of *Autocar* (which he'd been sports editor of since the Twenties) under the title 'Return to Le Mans'.





“The most interesting part of the trip was taking the car round the actual racing circuit,” wrote Davis, “beginning with that good hearty straight past the Café de l’Hippodrome and right down the Mulsanne with the speedometer needle up against the terminal pin where a hundred is registered.”

He was extremely complimentary of the car, later saying in the same piece, “One had the feeling that when the real Lagondas, developed from this prototype, come on the road they will be the cars which will carry the British green with every possible prospect of success on this circuit in this race.”

From mid-1949 until July 1950, the DHC was then used by David Brown’s wife, Daisy. Although there’s no written or visual proof of this, it’s speculated Brown himself occasionally drove the car adding to its already unique history.

Eventually, SMX10 was returned to the Feltham factory where it was overhauled

before being sold through Lagonda’s London agent, Brooklands of Bond Street, for £1,250.

Over the next four decades, the drophead coupe would have four owners, sadly becoming derelict in the Sixties. It was last taxed in 1963 when a Sidney Howard-Lucy of Hastings was the registered keeper after which it disappeared, losing the engine in the process. When the car resurfaced in the late Eighties, it was with a 2.6 saloon that still had its straight-six and the two were sold together at auction for £9,000. Neither, though, were restored and the two went up for sale again in 1992.

Around the same time, Rex Johnson, who had recently retired from running his own car repair business, was looking for a big Healey to restore after recently finishing a Triumph Roadster. “I couldn’t find one that was suitable, though,” said Rex to *Classic Cars* magazine in its April 1999 issue about the-then freshly

restored Lagonda, “then a dealer friend phoned and asked if I wanted a pair of Lagondas that he’d bought at auction. I said, ‘I don’t!’ But he told me the history of the cars and I gradually changed my mind.”

Rex paid just £3,500 for the two but by now SMX10 was in an appalling state with non-existent floors and rusted-through chassis members while the ash frame had disintegrated. The aluminium body was also dented and corroded while the front seats, engine and transmission were all missing.

Despite the four-door being in better condition, Rex preferred the DHC and so he raided the saloon for replacement panels, including the floors. He then made a new wooden frame. “I spent £700 just on the ash,” he continued. “I’d never done woodwork before, but it was alright – I just kept checking it over and over again to make sure everything was going to fit.” The engine was rebuilt with new piston rings and valve guides in the cylinder head ▶

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HISTORY

LAGONDA 2.6



while the end bearings were remetalled and replaced in the shell main bearings.

Considering the 2.6 DHC's rarity – a mere 118 were produced between October 1948 and July 1952 – Rex struck it lucky with some of the items he was missing. "I put a wanted ad in the club magazine and found a chap in Devon who had some of the parts such as the quarter light windows and hood irons." For the bits and pieces he couldn't find, Rex adapted what he could from the saloon such as the front seats, which he cut in half before fitting hinges so they tipped forward. A local trimmer then re-covered them and also made the hood. Rex, though, made the door trims and carpets himself using an industrial sewing machine he'd originally bought for his Roadster. For the parts the saloon didn't yield, such as the roof locators on top of the screen rail, Rex made these by hand from brass before having them chromed.

Clearly a huge effort, it took Rex six years of almost constant work to restore the green Lagonda, saying in *Classic Cars* that it cost him £12,000, half of what a 2.6 DHC was worth at the time. "But this car could be worth more because of its history – I'll start at £50,000 if ever I want to sell it!"

In 2011 he did just that when it was bought by current owner, Alan Heard. A long-term Lagonda enthusiast, his first was a 1939 V12 DHC – originally owned by the British actor, Sir Ralf Richardson – which he restored over eight years.

That was followed by a silver 2.6, which was sold to allow him to buy SMX10 after becoming aware of the car's place in Lagonda's history. Alan has had to do little to the DHC over the past decade apart from make it more usable. "Rex made a good job," he confirms, "but when you get these cars from the Forties and Fifties they're normally on cross-ply tyres which makes them all over the shop. So, the first I did was to change them for a set of Avon Turbosteel radials that do the job. The 2.6 also has a column change which can wear and needs adjusting so I repaired the linkage. By taking out all the slack it makes the 2.6 a usable car."

Unafraid to use it, Alan and the Lagonda are regulars at Aston Martin and Lagonda events all over the country. Due to its history and importance – including being what's thought to be the oldest model of either brand to be produced during the David Brown era. In working condition – the car no doubt receives just as much attention as it did at the 1948 Earls Court Show.

Although the Lagonda 2.6 has never gained the same level of recognition as the other cars revealed at the same time, there's no denying the significance of this particular example.

Thanks to: Owner Alan Heard



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WORDS PAUL WALTON

DIFFERENT APPROACH

Lagonda remains one of the UK's oldest car companies with its origins going back to the birth of the British car industry. For the 75th anniversary of it being bought by Aston Martin, we take a look at the often unique cars produced during its long and complex history

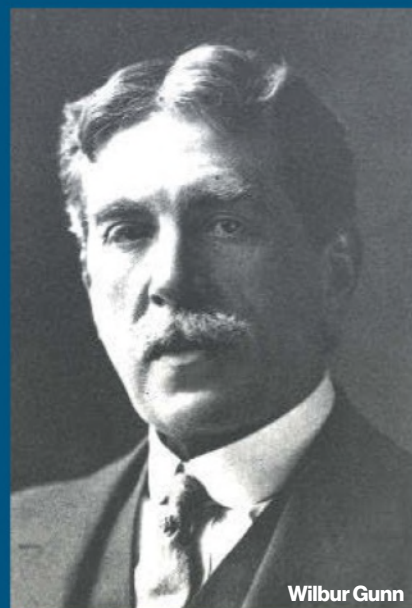
LAGONDA MIGHT have made less cars during its 116-year history than Ford probably produces in a week, but it remains one of the UK's oldest and most prestigious car brands. Originally founded in 1906 but with its origins going back even further, the name has outlived most British marques. And although Lagonda hasn't been independent since it was bought by (Sir) David Brown in 1947, starting a 75-year association with Aston Martin, it still has a reputation for developing some of the most interesting and unique cars ever made in this country.

Yet the man behind this most British of car manufacturers was an American, Wilbur Adams Gunn. The second child of a Methodist minister, John W. Gunn, Wilbur

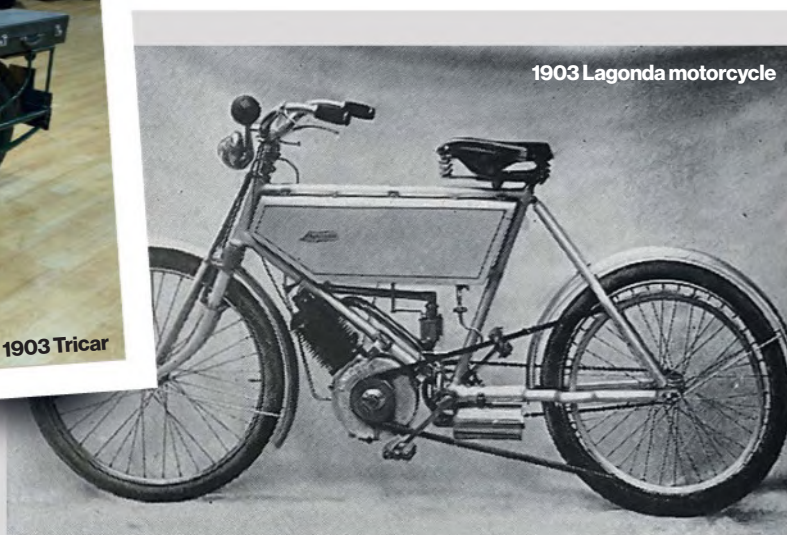
was born in 1859 in Lexington, Kentucky, although in the mid-Sixties the family moved to Springfield, Ohio.

After leaving school, Wilbur became an apprentice at the Singer sewing machine company somewhere in the US, moving back to his father's Springfield house in 1883 where he continued to live after marrying his wife, Bertha J. Meyers, on 23 July 1885.

Wilbur had also studied music in his youth, gaining a reputation as an opera singer and even held concerts in Springfield. Sometime in the 1890s he headed to the UK, possibly to further his singing career, although some say it was for engineering work. By now divorced from Bertha, once in England he set himself up as a consulting engineer,



Wilbur Gunn



specialising in hydraulics. It was while Wilbur was riding a bicycle to work that it occurred to him that if he fitted a small petrol motor to the front wheel, it would make navigating the muddy roads far easier. He made the first tiny motor himself which produced a mere 1/2hp.

Wilbur lived in a large, comfortable house in Staines, 20 miles west of London, where he built a steam launch in his greenhouse. Called the Giralda, it was to contest a wager as to whose was the fastest boat on the River Thames. He won.

During 1899 he set himself up as a specialist in marine engines, calling his company the Lagonda Engineering Company, the name coming from the Shawnee Indian dialect for what is now Buck Creek in Gunn's native Ohio. Still based in his greenhouse, by the turn of the century Gunn had turned his attention to motorcycles.

In 1903 he entered one of his Lagondas in the Auto Cycle Club's 1,000 Miles Trials that had daily routes radiating south of the Thames. Wilbur fared well over the gruelling seven-day event and at the finish was awarded a second-class award, one of 12 given (there were also seven firsts and four thirds). With the event widely reported in *The Motorcycle News* and Gunn often pictured riding his Lagonda, it gave his burgeoning company its first real publicity.

Gunn soon added to Lagonda's range by introducing the three-wheeled Tricar in 1903 plus a range of larger engines. In 1906 he formed the Lagonda Motor Co Ltd.

Lagondas did well in competition events up and down the country, including a gold medal in the tough London to Edinburgh Trial.



The 1935 24 Hour of Le Mans was won by the M45 Rapide of Hindmarsh and Fontes



M45



V12



DP115

But on 12 April 1907 and due to a lack of orders over the previous winter, the company went into receivership. Gunn, though, still managed to keep the company going, even building his first car, a water-cooled, 10hp model in 1909 that utilised many parts from Lagonda's three-wheeler. This was soon joined by a larger, 14-16hp and then a 16-18hp model.

As with motorcycles, Gunn was keen to enter the cars in competition where they often fared well, such as a lightweight version of the 18hp winning the Summer Handicap at Brooklands in 1909. Gunn was also awarded a gold medal for the Moscow-St Petersburg reliability trial in Russia the following year. In 1910 Gunn started a new company, Lagonda Cars,

and introduced an important new model, the 11.1hp. Although small and relatively simple, it was Lagonda's first model to be made in large numbers and included a two-seat coupe, four-seat tourer and even a van.

Due to the popularity of the car, Gunn bought the site of a former furniture depository, coachbuilder and pub close

As with motorcycles, Gunn was keen to enter the cars in competition where they often fared well, such as a lightweight version of the 18hp winning the Summer Handicap at Brooklands in 1909



M45 Saloon



1961 Rapide

HRH Prince Philip in his Lagonda 3.0



to his home which he demolished to make way for a new factory.

In 1913 the remnants of the Lagonda Motor Co Ltd were wound up with a new company, Lagonda Ltd, taking its place. This subsequently bought Gunn's current business, now called Lagonda Motor Company, to carry on manufacturing cars.

During world war one, Lagonda made a remote control system of gunnery control which was used by the navy's ships and also machined the several million shells the War Office had bought from America down to British sizes.

Production of the 11.1hp restarted immediately after hostilities had ended, which was soon joined by a larger engined 11.9. After being ill for some time, Gunn died on 27 September 1920, aged just 61. The long hours he had worked during the war as well as rebuilding the company afterwards had put a huge strain on his already failing health. His fellow directors took charge of the company.

The 11.1 continued in production until 1923 when it was replaced by the 12/24. In 1925 this was joined by an all-new model, the 14/60, that was a much larger, heavier and more powerful car. It would remain in production for several years, becoming the backbone of Lagonda production. A lengthened chassis version, the 16/65, with a six-cylinder 2.4-litre engine, was available from 1926 to 1930. Lagonda's final car of the Twenties was the 3.0-litre



William Towns' Lagonda Series 2

HISTORY

LAGONDA



The Vignale concept from 1993

using a 2,931cc six-cylinder engine. This continued until 1933 when the engine grew to 3,181cc and was also available with a complex eight-speed Maybach transmission.

In 1933 and needing a larger engine to replace its existing 3.0-litre, Lagonda began using a 4.5-litre produced by an independent British engineering firm, Henry Meadows Ltd of Wolverhampton, that had previously powered the Invicta. The first Lagonda to be powered by this unit was the M45 that used the same chassis as the current 3.0-litre, but was fitted with servo brakes and a heavier rear axle.

The M45 was an instant hit, gaining positive reports by the motoring press. "A short run in one of the first of the 4.5-litre Lagonda models, with an open four-seater body, left a vivid impression not only of brilliant acceleration and sheer performance," reported *The Autocar* in 1933, "but of a car delightfully silent and easy running in a way that can be achieved to its fullest extent only by a big-engined machine working well inside its limits."

In 1934 Lagonda introduced a new, sportier version of the M45 called



Lagonda Series 4

the Rapide that featured a higher compression ratio version of Meadows' engine to produce 190bhp plus a shortened and reinforced frame in which the engine was moved slightly further forward.

One of Lagonda's main agents, Fox & Nicholls, prepared three of these versions for competition which performed well at the 1934 RAC Tourist Trophy at Ards, finishing fourth, fifth and eighth. One year later, one of those TT cars driven by John Hindmarsh and Luis Fontes won the Le Mans 24 Hours, the marque's sole victory to date of this famous race.

Yet despite the M45's resultant popularity plus the introduction in 1934 of a new small car, the 1.1-litre Rapier, not long after the Le Mans victory the company entered receivership once again. Despite interest from Rolls-Royce, the company was bought by a 29-year-old solicitor, Alan Good, who incredibly persuaded legendary designer, W.O. Bentley, to join the company from Rolls.

Within days of the takeover, it was decided Lagonda would concentrate on the M45 and dropped the Rapier, which was later built by a new, separate company, Rapier Cars Ltd of

Hammersmith Road, London, using premises previously used by Lagonda for its London service centre.

Bentley's first act was to refine the M45, resulting in the LG45. But behind the scenes, he was working on a 4,480cc V12 engine that debuted in a new car at the 1936 Earls Court Motor Show, although production didn't start for another two years. The V12 model was available with three chassis lengths – 124in (3,150 mm), 132in (3,353 mm) or 138in (3,505 mm) plus a variety of body styles.

Smooth and refined, the new car was praised by the press. "The secret of its performance," said *The Motor* in its September 27 1938 issue, "lies in the 4 ½-litre engine that will run without noise, fuss or vibration, right up to 5,500rpm, but even that statement conveys nothing of the ease and quietness with which the car achieves and maintains high cruising speeds, so that one is scarcely conscious of any mechanical process at all."

To illustrate the car's speed, two modified V12 models were entered into the 1939 Le Mans 24 Hours where they finished a strong third and fourth.

The outbreak of the second world war in September the same year stopped any chance of improving on that result. As with the first world



2009 SUV Concept

The Lagonda's initial popularity helped to secure the company's future and following two updates, stayed in production until 1990 after 645 had been built.

war, the Lagonda factory was involved in the production of armaments for the War Office including a number of flame throwers that could be fitted to armoured vehicles.

Towards the end of the conflict, Bentley had designed a 2.6-litre straight-six engine for a new car which was announced in September 1945. Initially to be called Lagonda-Bentley, on hearing

this, Rolls-Royce – which had bought the Bentley Motor Co in 1931 – immediately put a stop to the name. As a result, the car was instead described as the "Lagonda 2 ½-litre – designed under the supervision of W.O. Bentley."

Yet despite securing several orders for the car, it was clear the company wasn't in a financial position to actually produce it. And so in early 1947, Lagonda was put



Lagonda's final production car so far was the Taraf from 2015

HISTORY

LAGONDA

The Vision Concept from 2018



up for sale. After testing a prototype of the 2.6, British engineering magnate, David Brown, had been impressed by the engine, realising it was perfect for his other recent purchase, Aston Martin. After buying Lagonda for £52,500, he joined the two companies together. And three quarters of a century later, they remain as one.

Since the purchase didn't include Lagonda's Staines factory, car production moved to Aston's Feltham premises, severing links with the company's origins. At the same time, W.O. Bentley decided to retire, later saying designing Lagonda's V12 had given him the most personal satisfaction of his long career in the motor industry.

When the 2.6-litre went into production in 1948, the press was impressed. Said *Autocar* in its November 11 1949 issue, "It makes the driver yearn for unlimited fuel and the opportunity to head it up to the fastest stretch of the road in these islands, in the consecutive sense, from London to Scotland, or, better still, across the continent."

The car stayed in production for five years when it was replaced by the 3.0-litre. Although using the same chassis, the car's new body was designed by another of Brown's recent purchases, the coachbuilder Tickford, and the engine bored out to 2,922cc.

In 1954 the HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, bought the fourth 3.0-litre drophead coupe produced to be his personal transport, winning Aston Martin Lagonda its first royal warrant. His Royal Highness used the car until 1961, even taking it on a tour of the Commonwealth in 1956-1957, via The Royal Yacht Britannia. Images of the car at the opening of the 1956 Melbourne Olympics were seen all over the world. The car was even used to officially open the M1 motorway in 1959.

Wanting Lagonda to rival Rolls-Royce and Bentley in terms of refinement, Brown realised a new V12 was the way forward. The design was entrusted to engineer Willie Watson – a collaborator with Bentley on the pre-war V12 – who quickly created a brand-new aluminium 4,487cc unit.

Although initially destined for the road, it later occurred to Brown that a racing car could use this V12. Aston's racing team was beginning to be hampered by the 3.0-litre engine in the DB3 due to reaching the limits of its development.

This V12 was subsequently fitted into a modified DB3 chassis and rechristened the Lagonda DP115. Although two were built, only one was entered into the 1954 Le Mans 24 Hour race but after reaching as high as third, it retired after the steering broke. Brown commissioned a brand-new multi-tubular spaceframe/backbone

chassis for the engine in 1955, resulting in the DP166. Unfortunately, the single car that entered Le Mans again failed to finish after the car ran out of fuel. The V12 project was dropped after the sport's governing body brought in engine size limits after a dreadful crash the same year. The DP166's chassis, though, was reused by the more successful Aston Martin DBR2.

When production of the 3.0 road car ended in 1958 and there was no replacement, many thought that was the end of the Lagonda brand. But in 1961 a new model using an old name, the Rapide, was revealed. A four-door saloon based on the Aston Martin DB4 and using the same Tadeusz 'Tadek' Marek-designed 4.0-litre straight-six, the car's distinctive styling was courtesy of Carrozzeria Touring in Milan. But with the Jaguar Mk X that had arrived the same year costing £2,261, at £4,950 the Rapide was an expensive option and just 55 were built.

Where was again no immediate replacement when the Rapide finished in 1964 and the Lagonda name remained dormant for five years. It was eventually brought back for a four-door prototype that was based on a stretched DBS V8 and powered by an early V8 engine that displaced 5.0 litres. Used by David Brown as his personal transport, the car ►



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HISTORY

LAGONDA

remained a one-off until 1974 when, two years after he had sold the company to an investment consortium, the car finally reached production in an attempt to widen Aston's customer base.

These later versions differed from the original by having a distinctive Lagonda grille and the standard 5.3 V8. Priced at £14,040, the four-door Lagonda was £2,691 more than an Aston V8 saloon and just seven were built.

William Towns (who had designed both the original DBS and the stretched version) had already started to work on a new model. Using Aston's existing V8 but sitting on a new chassis, the car was very different from its predecessor, its sleek and square-edged design looking much

more futuristic by comparison.

Due to problems in its development, following the car's debut at the 1976 British Motor Show, the new Lagonda (known as the Series 2) didn't reach full production until 1979. Despite costing £32,620 when a Daimler Double-Six Vanden Plas was £21k, the Lagonda's initial popularity helped to secure the company's future and following two updates, stayed in production until 1990 after 645 had been built.

After Ford's purchase of AML in 1992, the next Lagonda was the Vignale, a five-seat, four-door saloon concept that was designed by Ghia and based on an extended Lincoln Town Car chassis using Ford's 4.6-litre V8.

The brand wasn't seen again until 2009 for another concept, this time an SUV, to celebrate the centenary of the company's first car. The next Lagonda production car was the 2015 Taraf, a four-door V12 saloon that was unashamedly influenced by William Towns' Series 2. Developed by Aston Martin's Q division, the Taraf cost a cool \$1m each and just 120 were built before production ended in December 2016.

By the end of the 2010s, Aston was starting to reposition Lagonda as a specialist of exclusive, all-electric vehicles with two EV prototypes revealed in quick succession. The first was the Vision Concept in 2018, a radical four-seat, four-door saloon followed a year later by the All-Terrain Concept.

Although these remain prototypes for now, the success of cars such as the Tesla Model X and Porsche Taycan show there's a growing market for exclusive electric vehicles. And so it can't be long before Lagonda returns, adding to its long list of traditionally low volume but always memorable cars. **AMD**

By the end of the 2010s, Aston was starting to reposition Lagonda as a specialist of exclusive, all-electric vehicles with two EV prototypes revealed in quick succession



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RIDE OF THE

We take a terrifying passenger ride in the outrageous 1,000bhp Valkyrie AMR Pro that was originally designed for competition but is now available to a lucky handful of people as the ultimate track car

WORDS: KYLE FORTUNE
PHOTOGRAPHY: ASTON MARTIN

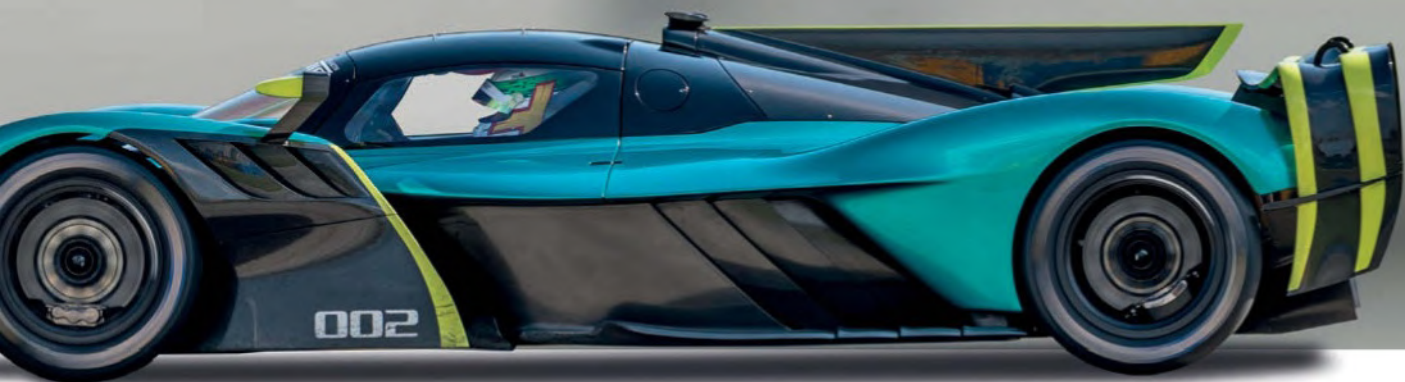




EVERY SINGLE millimetre was reduced, nothing is spare," explains Marek Reichman, executive vice president and chief creative officer at Aston Martin Lagonda. That much is obvious peeking into the interior of the Aston Martin Valkyrie AMR Pro as it sits in the pit lane at the Homestead-Miami Speedway in Florida, USA. It looks incredibly tight in there, but Reichman's tall, and he's not designed a car he won't fit in, so I'm assured I'll be all right. I'll be folding my frame into the passenger seat today, Aston Martin being justifiably cautious with its new track-only hypercar, so British racer, Andy Priaulx, will be taking care of the driving. If I'm being brutally honest, I'm completely okay with that.

A spin-off from the Valkyrie road car, the AMR Pro was originally conceived to race in the FIA World Endurance Championship's new hypercar class before Aston Martin had a change of heart. Rather than completely shelve the project it decided to develop it as a track car for customers. Just 40 have been built, for around £3.5m each – depending on where you're located. Given its genesis, if some of those customers ▶

E VALKYRIE







want to race it, they conceivably could. The structure is FIA approved, it being based around a fully carbon fibre tub, so it's basically a number of stickers, a splash of a sponsoring company's colours and a handful of accompanying logos off being race ready.

Behind that carbon fibre tub sits a naturally aspirated 6.5-litre V12, but unlike the Valkyrie road car, it does without a hybrid system. That means it's actually down on power over the Valkyrie, but where it takes away it also gains, and it's significant, because losing it also removes weight. Even without the hybrid system to assist the engine it's far from lacking in power. Overall, there's 1,000bhp – available to you in 100bhp incremental steps from 600bhp to 1,000bhp depending on how brave you're feeling – while that V12 will rev to a heady 11,400rpm and produces a peak of 549 lb ft of torque.

It might have lost the road car's full hybrid system, but there's electric drive to the wheels, with an electric starter system which shuts the engine down when pulling to a stop and also allowing it to pull away up to 28km/h before the V12 fires. That ability is a legacy of the FIA's ▶



MODERN RIDE
RIDE OF THE VALKYRIE





regulations for pit stops, and reveals even more of the AMR Pro's race car bloodline. That's furthered by the specification of an Xtrac pneumatically actuated single-piston seven-speed sequential gearbox and carbon brakes from F1 team supplier Carbone Industrie.

Sat idle in the pit lane it's a mere 987kg, though at 340km/h (211mph) you can add 2,100kg to that due to the air rushing over, through, and most significantly, under it. That is produced despite the AMR Pro lacking the active aero of its road car relation, and because Aston Martin admits its racing-specification Michelin slick tyres are designed to cope with such loads, as well as nearly 3G in corners. The road car's active aero is actually a function to bleed off downforce, to prevent its street tyres from destroying themselves by being overloaded.

Strapped in, the race belts pinching as they're so tight, Priaux gives a quick thumbs-up before the doors are shut and still in electric mode, the

AMR Pro starts to move silently down Homestead's expansive pit lane. A few seconds later the V12 fires, it's not as raucous as I'd anticipated, my helmet dampening the mechanical combustion symphony, though the vibrations fizz through the carbon structure adding a physical frequency to support the aural soundtrack.

One sighting lap, as much to allow Priaux to get used to the circa ten percent I've added to the car's mass as it is to allow me to prepare myself for what's coming. In my mind 'sighting' equates to relatively sedate, but the first corner out of the pit lane and the V12's intensity increases markedly, and the AMR Pro gains speed like little else I've ever strapped myself into. If the gain was eye-widening, then the first time Priaux steps on the brakes is genuinely breathtaking, as my seatbelts now feel loose as the forces acting on my body shift me within them. I've never been more glad of my HANS device, the straps between it and my helmet giving my ►



neck muscles a chance against the forces acting on them. Sighting? Urm, okay.

Priaux admitted before we set off that the Homestead's 2.185-mile (3.5km) road course is a bit tight for the AMR Pro to really demonstrate what it's ultimately capable of. If that's really the case, then I'm genuinely struggling to comprehend what that could possibly be as he drops into turn one at what I'm guessing is flat out after that 'sighting' lap. It drops to the

left, off Homestead's banking for the oval circuit, the transition from banked to flat tarmac the first force to contend with, as are the incredible forces I'm feeling as the aero gets to work and allows the AMR Pro to really dig in. If the entry speed is difficult to comprehend, then the fact Priaux is accelerating through the bend is even more so. All before he really brakes for what's unimaginatively called Turn 2. A left-hander, the AMR Pro

loses speed with more authority than it gains it, doubly so if my straining muscles are to be believed, the braking forces even more savage than the G loadings on acceleration, turn in and through that fastest bend.

What follows, over three ever faster laps, has me recalibrating my thoughts on what's possible in a car. I've never been in anything that changes direction with such conviction, grips so hard and asks



so much physically, it is an assault on the senses that might sound awful to some but leaves me aching for more. Each lap is quicker, more intense, a rising high that has me giggling uncontrollably for much of it, mainlining adrenaline rather than fear, the AMR Pro resolute in delivering whatever Priaux asks from it.

"About seven to eight," is Priaux's response when we finally pull in, and I ask just how hard he was trying out of ten. And

the power? It was only set to 800bhp. All of which leaves me wondering what might be possible with a little bit more space, another 200bhp and me behind the wheel. I doubt anything like what Priaux has demonstrated, but for the lucky few, with the means, they'll get the

opportunity to try to. If I could, I would, and without hesitation because it's genuinely the most intense, addictive thing I've ever encountered. **AMD**

DBS VOLANTE

OPEN SESAMIE

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: PAUL WALTON





Although Aston Martin never produced a Volante version of the DBS, it didn't stop independent British coachbuilder, Banham Conversions, from developing one in the late Eighties, resulting in a surprisingly handsome convertible. Only made in small numbers, we've tracked down a rare example

LIKE IT has throughout its long history, Aston Martin was facing some lean times in the mid-Sixties. A lack of growth in the British economy had started to hit the company hard and from double figures at the start of the decade, by 1966 sales had plummeted to three or four cars a week.

It didn't help that the existing DB6 appeared old-fashioned compared to stylish new models including the Jensen Interceptor, Maserati Ghibli and

Mercedes-Benz SL. This meant Aston needed a new car and needed it fast.

Carrozzeria Touring of Milan, which had been responsible for the DB4, DB5 and DB6, already revealed a potential replacement, the DBS, at the 1966 British Motor Show.

But despite its handsome lines that were clearly influenced by the previous generation of cars, Aston's chairman, (Sir) David Brown, decided on a very different design that was by one of his own team. William Towns had started his career

at Rootes in 1954 where he designed door handles before moving to Rover nine years later, becoming involved in the BRM gas turbine-powered Le Mans car. When he headed to Aston in 1966 it was to initially design seats, but he still made Brown aware of his ideas for a future Aston Martin. After being originally uninterested, the chairman eventually gave the 33-year-old the go ahead to quickly turn them into a reality.

Using the DB6's chassis which had been widened by six inches, the new car



CLASSIC DRIVE DBS CONVERTIBLE



was very different from its predecessor. Not only was it wider and lower, but the crisper styling, squared-off nose and fastback tail made it a handsome, arguably more purposeful car that was very much of the era.

As *Autosport* magazine said in its 29 September 1967 issue, "It is a true thoroughbred and is likely to become the glamour car of 1968, offering severe competition to the Italians in this ever-growing and highly competitive market."

Yet when the new car was revealed at the 1967 British Motor Show it was called, rather surprisingly, the DBS rather than the DB7 like many had expected. It's perhaps due to the publicity the Tourin-designed car had received why Aston decided to use the name.

Something else that was a surprise was the lack of a Volante (Aston's name for a convertible since 1965). Whether it was because there hadn't been enough time to develop such a model or Aston



CLASSIC DRIVE

DBS CONVERTIBLE



thought the market for open cars was no longer viable since customers were preferring more luxurious models like the Jensen, but the DBS was only available as a four-seat coupe. And neither was there a convertible version of the V8 model that arrived in 1969 or the updated 1972 car. It wasn't until 1978 that Aston was finally able to produce an official Volante based on the car, by now in V8 Series 4 guise. But at £34k when a Ferrari 308 GTB was £17,300 and a Mercedes-Benz 350SL was a little under 16 grand, it made the car an expensive option as it would be for the ten years it remained in production.

But in the late Eighties, Banham Conversions of Rochester, Kent, began to offer a cheaper alternative. But this only arrived by accident.

Paul began his career in coachbuilding during the early Eighties by developing a convertible version of the Ferrari 400i, Jaguar XJ-S and Rolls Royce Corniche. He moved into kit cars during the Nineties, becoming one of the market's most prolific producers.

When I call his workshop that's still based in Kent, but where he now specialises in steering wheels and roof linings, Paul tells me that he's owned a variety of Astons over the years including

a scruffy DBS in the late Eighties. Like most examples at the time, it wasn't worth a great deal, so he decided to transform it into a convertible. He also replaced the 4.0-litre engine for a Jaguar unit but that's another story.

Since the conversion from coupe to convertible was a success both aesthetically and technically, he began offering it to other DBS owners. He tells me classic car dealers were his biggest customer as they attempted to make this cheap and relatively unloved Aston more desirable and therefore valuable. Paul reckons he converted around 30 examples in total, consisting of DBS, DBS V8 and early V8 models.

One of these is the straight-six example shown here (chassis number DBS/5746/R) that was originally Silver Grey. Supplied new in January 1971 by Sundridge Park Motors Bromley in Kent, when it was converted from a coupe to a convertible in around 1989, the car was still reasonably local to Banham's workshop. At the same time as the roof was removed, the colour was also changed to Aztec Gold.

The car is currently for sale through JD Classics in Chelmsford, Essex, which is where I've travelled to see it. Recently





restored elsewhere to a very high standard, it is one of the best examples of the Banham DBS around, the gold making it appear very regal for what was once a rakish looking coupe. Surprisingly, Paul remembers this exact car, saying it turned out well. I don't disagree.

Although he tells me the design of the transformation was all done by eye, it's still a neat and tidy conversion, the angular lines perfectly suited to having the roof lopped off. The end result is so nicely proportioned that it could easily have been designed by Towns himself and produced at Aston Martin's Newport Pagnell factory.

Admittedly, the roof pack sits a little too proud above the belt line when folded, but then it also does on the later V8 Volante as well as most other convertibles of the Seventies and Eighties. And if I'm being really picky, the angle of the hood when erected is perhaps too steep at the rear but despite not being powered like Aston's own version, the canvas can still be

lowered or raised in seconds. The interior (which was also designed by Towns) remains untouched which means plenty of black vinyl across the dash while in front of me is a row of seven white-on-black dials. Although relatively simple compared to the art deco-like design of the DB6 that has more chrome than a Fifties jukebox, like everything else Towns touched, it's as functional as it is stylish.

The 4.0-litre straight-six slowly churns into life and since this example was fitted with the three-speed BorgWarner 8 automatic transmission, I slot the tall gearlever into Drive and gently squeeze the throttle. Despite the engine producing a healthy 282bhp, the kindest way to describe its acceleration is 'steady' but in truth it's just plain slow, no doubt the result of the car's considerable weight.

Aston Martin's DBS doesn't use Touring's famed lightweight Superleggera construction like the earlier cars, having a substructure made from several steel pressings instead. Despite the exterior

CLASSIC DRIVE

DBS CONVERTIBLE

panels were made from aluminium, the six-cylinder coupe still weighed 1,587kg (3,500 lb), almost 200kg more than the DB6. Although the weight of the Banham convertible isn't known, since Paul tells me he added steel tubing to the sills and A-pillars for extra strength, it will be considerably more.

The achingly slow time it takes for the three-speed 'box to respond doesn't help its cause either, taking an age to kick down, slamming awkwardly into gear when it does. If it was fitted with the ZF-sourced five-speed manual transmission that was also available at the time, I'd have more control over the engine's 290 lb ft of torque which might improve the acceleration a little. But no matter the gearbox, it will never be the fast and agile sports car models from same era as the DBS such as the Jensen-Healey or Triumph TR6 are. ▶



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Although period press reports were positive of how the DBS behaved on the road, with *Motor* saying in its 21 December 1968 issue that the car had, “outstanding handling and roadholding”, the convertible conversion has clearly changed that. With the extra weight losing what *Motor* also called “impeccable balance”, the car feels fat, heavy and rather unwieldy and I worry if I take a corner too fast it will end in disaster. And a ditch.

On a more positive note, all that extra strengthening has resulted in little

noticeable scuttle-shake compared to some in-house ragtops I've driven, such as an early example of the XJ-S convertible from 1988.

Besides, the DBS was always more of a grand tourer than a pure sports car and the Banham conversion hasn't lost this side of its character. Although originally planned for the DB4, the DBS was the first Aston Martin to be fitted with a De Dion style of rear suspension and despite the car's extra weight, this rather old-fashioned set-up still does a sterling job of absorbing any road imperfections.

Yet what impresses me most about Banham's DBS convertible is the lack of wind noise in the cabin when the hood is lowered. Even at speed it feels calm and quiet, as if a modern wind break has been

fitted behind the front seats. Considering the little, if any, development that went into the car other than taking a sharp blade to the B- and C-pillars, it's a remarkable achievement for the small, independent coachbuilder that made it.

Paul Banham's first DBS Convertible might have been a simple experiment, but by being good-looking and surprisingly refined, the 'production' examples that followed are a worthy addition to the long list of convertible Aston Martins. It also shows, despite what the company might have thought, a DBS Volante would have been a highly desirable and no doubt popular model. **AMD**

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British driver, Clive Gallop, refuels the TT2 during the 1922 French Grand Prix



BIOGRAPHY BEYOND THE NAME

WORDS RICHARD GUNN ARCHIVE IMAGES KELSEY ARCHIVE

Lionel Martin may have been associated with the marque that bears his surname for only a decade, but he established the template that company owners of the future would build upon



Lionel Martin

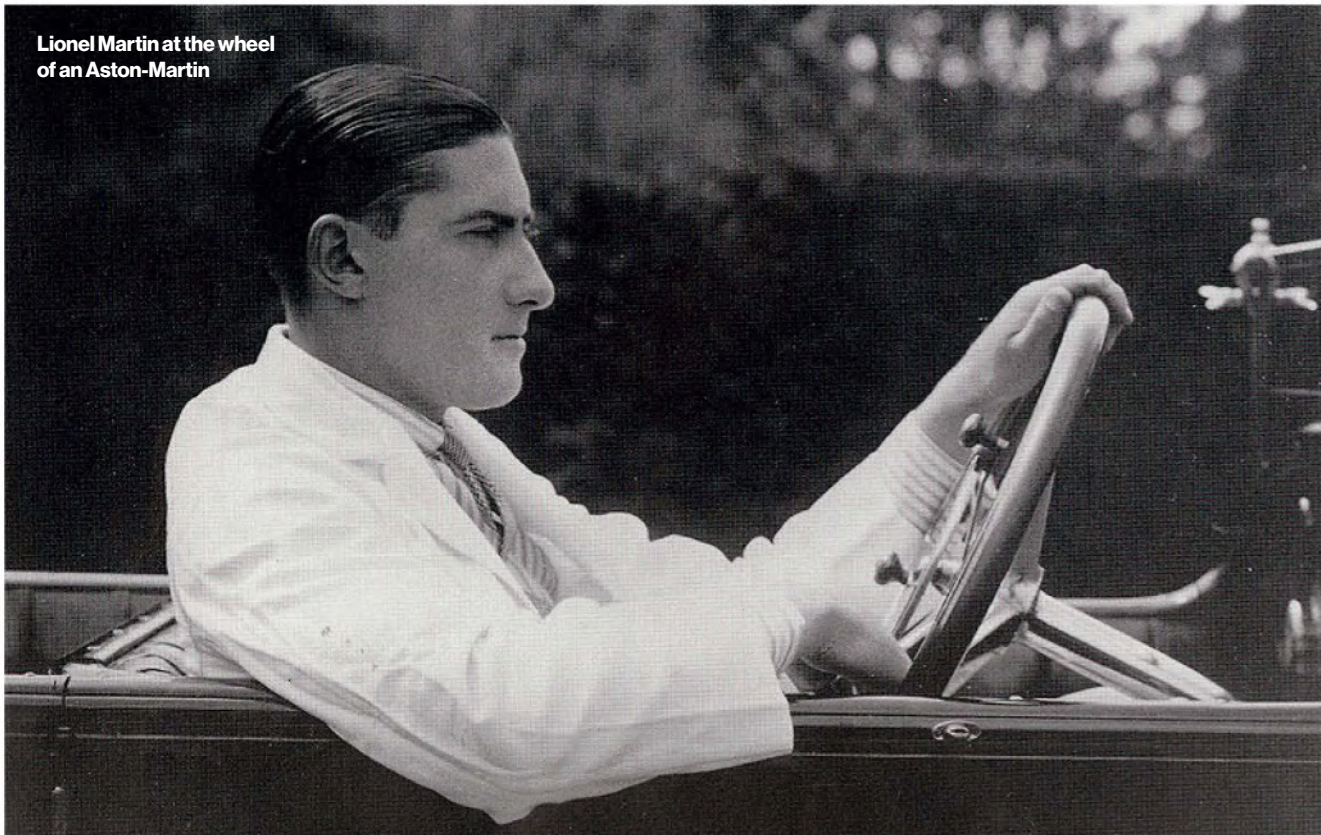
THERE MAY have been two men behind the foundation of Aston Martin, but only one is still recalled today on the badge. Lionel Walker

Birch Martin was born on 15 March 1878 at Nansladron House near the small coastal village of Pentewan in Cornwall. His prosperous father, Edward Martin, owned both Martin Brothers China Clay Merchants and the Lee Moor porcelain factory, so the young Lionel found himself in a comfortable and affluent world where mechanisation played a

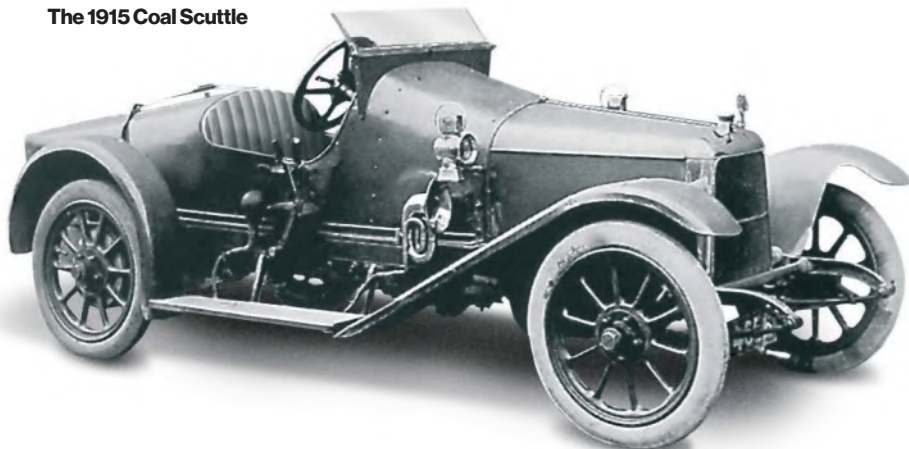
vital role. Although the West Country was the family's centre of business operations, the only child was soon moved to Knightsbridge in London, where he would spend his formative years until starting at Eton College in 1891. It was there that he developed an interest in the craze of the era; cycling. His first machine was a Singer, which he received as a reward for helping his mother learn to ride. This was upgraded to a racing Osmond, around the time that Martin moved on to Brasenose College in Oxford during 1897.

There, he joined the Oxford University Bicycle Club and was soon noted for his racing talents; one of those he competed against was a certain William Morris, later to found Morris Motors. He joined the Bath Road Club (BRC) – the most select of all cycling groups – in 1902. A major achievement that year was breaking the record from Land's End to London. He left the tip of Cornwall at 7:06am on a Wednesday and arrived at Hyde Park Corner at 5.22am the following day, knocking over three hours off the previous record. The *Bath Road News* noted that his staple diet during the ride ►



**Lionel Martin at the wheel
of an Aston-Martin**

was, “fowl, tons of chicken legs, washed down with quarts, we may safely say gallons, of ginger ale and milk”. Ginger wasn’t his preferred ‘ale’ though; he was especially notorious for his love of draught old ale. He graduated from Oxford with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1902 and while he remained a keen cyclist – being elected the captain of the BRC during 1903 – his interest began to drift when he purchased a Humber 2 3/4hp motorcycle. He also began forging a career, courtesy of Selwyn Francis Edge, a fellow cyclist with whom he entered into business with,

The 1915 Coal Scuttle

‘One place where Martin and his tweaked Ten did especially well was at the Aston Hill Climb, on Lord Rothschild’s estate at Aston Clinton in Buckinghamshire’

selling De Dion and Napier cars. The fact that Montague Napier was also a member of the BRC no doubt had some bearing on the decision. His duties within what he described as a ‘very profitable partnership’ involved demonstrating Napiers and De Dions throughout Britain.

Friends noted that his switch from cycling to driving resulted in him growing quite stout – no doubt his love of ale also playing a role in his burgeoning weight.

He returned to cycling again in 1909, although not through choice – being prosecuted for speeding saw him lose his driving licence for two years. This time, he favoured three wheels instead of two, opting to race tricycles. The slower pace of life also allowed time for him to get married to Christine Murray. However, when he got his licence back in May 1911, he was noted by one BRC member to be straight away, “driving a 100hp car, tearing up the nice country roads and spoiling them for nice, quiet, unoffending cyclists”.

His brief return to competitive cycling – or at least tricycling – had also brought him into contact with a new BRC member, Robert Bamford, an engineering apprentice and son of an Essex curate.



Count Louis Zborowski
at the 1922 French Grand
Prix in an Aston Martin

The two quickly became friends, so much so, that in 1912 they decided to go into business together, selling bicycles and cars from premises in Callow Street, Chelsea. They also serviced Calthorpe, GWK and Singer vehicles, and for their workshop premises they took over the former depot of marine, motor and general engineers, Hesse and Savory, in adjacent Henniker Mews. It was here, at number 16, that Bamford & Martin Ltd was officially incorporated on 15 January 1913.

Bamford was responsible for the engineering side, while Martin handled the business affairs. Together though, they worked on Martin's 1912 Singer Ten, modifying it enough to raise its top speed to 70mph, an impressive speed for something with just a 1096cc sidevalve engine. Martin enthusiastically took it racing, perhaps to distract him from the tragedy of losing his wife after just four years of marriage. She died in April 1913, aged just 25, of complications following the birth of their son, John. One place where Martin and his tweaked Ten did especially well was at the Aston Hill Climb, on Lord Rothschild's estate at Aston Clinton in Buckinghamshire.

The success of the little Singer prompted Bamford & Martin customers to ask for similar modifications, but the pair became frustrated at what was involved and decided to build their own machine instead. They used a 1908 Isotta-Fraschini chassis and 1398cc Coventry-Simplex sidevalve engine, with their own design of distinctive radiator surround and angular, swept-up coachwork which led to the car being nicknamed the 'Coal Scuttle'. Officially though, the car, registered AM 4656 in March 1915, was given the name 'Aston-Martin' – note the hyphen – in reference to the Aston Hill Climb where Martin had previously done so well. One purported reason for it not being christened 'Bamford-Martin' is that the woman that Martin would marry two years later, Katherine King, suggested 'Aston-Martin' would put the company up near the head of alphabetic lists.

Aston-Martin had been born – and then almost instantly disappeared, due to the inconvenient outbreak of the first world war. All the machinery at Henniker Mews was sold off to the Sopwith Aviation



Katherine Martin - wife of Lionel and an accomplished racer in her own right



Adolf Hühnelein, who Martin once embarrassed in an unofficial road race while surveying the route of the Alpine Trial



Montague Napier



Robert Bamford



Company and Martin became a driver for the Royal Automobile Club (RAC), ferrying military VIPs around, before going to work for the Admiralty at its Chepstow shipyards. His war duties were able to be interrupted in January 1917 for his marriage to Katherine.

With the end of the war in November 1918, the old Bamford & Martin team reconvened to start building more Aston-Martins. The tiny premises at Henniker Mews

were swapped for a new 'factory' at Abingdon Road, Kensington, in January 1920, just a few blocks from the Martins' new home at The Hollies, Pembroke Villas. It was at Abingdon Road that the second Aston-Martin, registered AM 270,

was constructed as a better-handling evolution of the Coal Scuttle with a shorter and more robust chassis. Katherine Martin also had a hand in its naming; she christened the 1486c car 'Bunny'.

***During 1924,
Aston-Martin
managed to put
together a mere 26
cars for sale***

To prove the car to potential customers, Martin participated in long road runs and major trials, often accompanied by his wife, who also proved a very adept driver. Bunny also competed at Brooklands. The antics got Aston-Martin noticed and the

firm started to consider serial production. Mr and Mrs Martin also courted the motoring elite of the day with gatherings at The Hollies, where Katherine was remembered by one visitor as, "a wonderful housekeeper and a wonderful



Lionel Martin gives AM 270 - 'Bunny' - some attention



Aston-Martin origins plaque at Aston hillcimb

Plaque at
Henniker
Mews



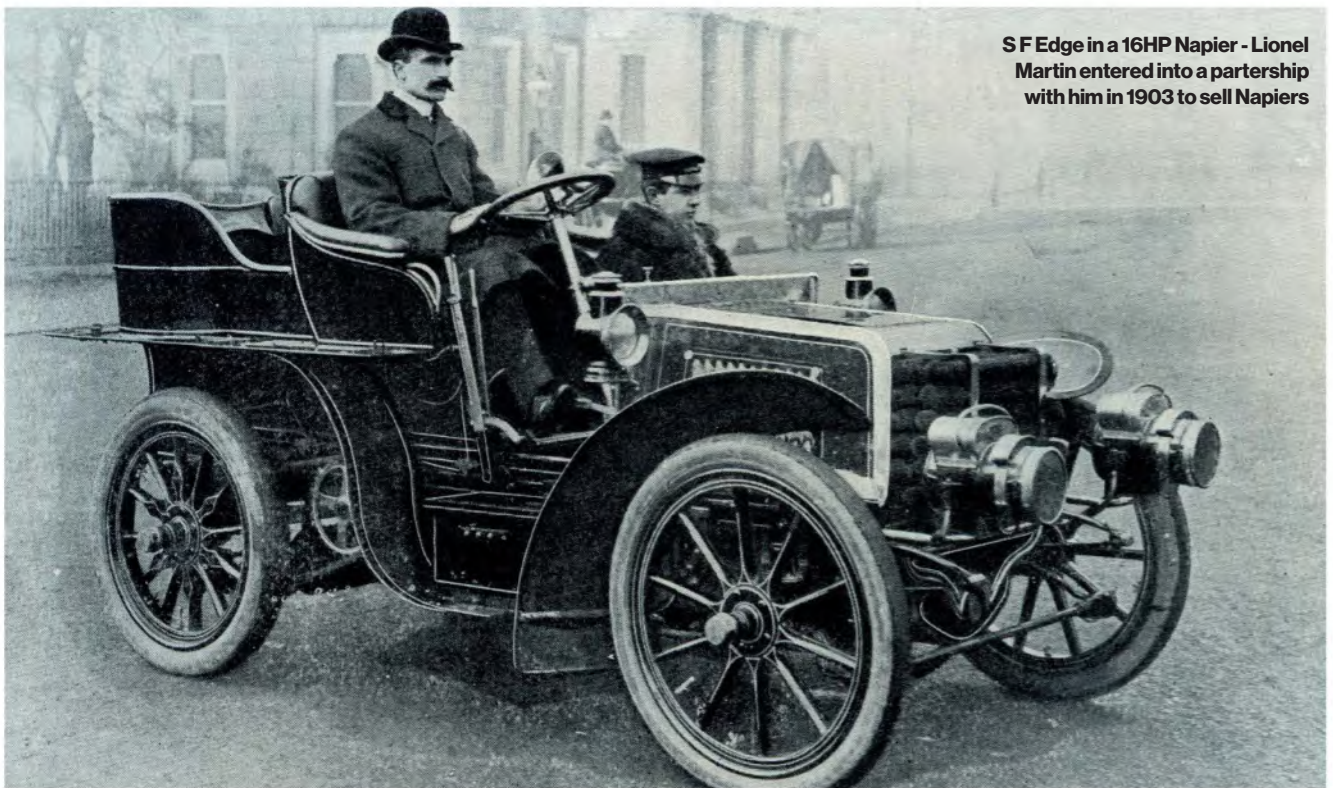
cook; a meal in her house was one to be remembered, plus wine from a very good cellar". She also became a director of the firm after Robert Bamford lost interest during the latter months of 1920 and was bought out by Martin.

In order to generate more publicity, Aston-Martin embarked on a full-scale racing programme, although Martin himself took on more of an organisational role and now left the racing to others. One of those who competed in Aston-Martins during the early 1920s was Count Louis Zborowski, the aristocratic racer behind the 'Chitty Bang Bang' leviathans. He also put money into the company, by some accounts giving Lionel Martin's firm a not inconsiderable £10,000 – no wonder Martin referred to the count (who, it seems, may not have had any title at all) as 'a prince of sportsmen'. By the dawn of 1922 though, even though Aston-Martins were making quite an impression in motorsport, none had been sold to the public.

During the first months of 1922, Martin made a trip to Bristol with Zborowski and others to try and convince 'an aeroplane company' (in Martin's words) to start building production Aston-Martins. However, one of the cars kept breaking down, leading to the group arriving late for lunch. Perhaps unsurprisingly after that, nothing came of the scheme. It wasn't until the start of 1923 that the first Aston-Martins started finding their way into private hands, initially ex-racers being sold off followed by entirely new cars, albeit constructed very slowly at Abingdon Road. During 1924, Aston-Martin managed to put together a mere 26 cars for sale. The motorsport adventures also continued - including one incident where Martin seems to have forgotten he was towing a brand-new competition car and got into a street race with another vehicle – ultimately resulting in the factory-fresh racer being destroyed by a lorry while still attached to its rope.

BIOGRAPHY

LIONEL MARTIN



S F Edge in a 16HP Napier - Lionel Martin entered into a partnership with him in 1903 to sell Napiers

During October of that year, Count Zborowski was killed in the Italian Grand Prix and Aston-Martin's vital money pipeline dried up. His place was taken by the wealthy Lady Charnwood whose son, John Roby Benson, worked for the firm as an engineer. She contributed £10,000 to acquire the assets of Bamford & Martin; a new Aston-Martin company was then formed with herself as a director alongside her son and Mr and Mrs Martin.

Despite the injection of cash, Aston-Martin's finances remained woeful and on 11 November 1925, the receiver was called in. Martin was sacked two days later from the company he had founded. He then decided to sue Benson for slander after rumours that he'd said that Martin hadn't run the company well and had stolen some parts. The person who probably came off worst during the case was Katherine Martin when it emerged that her nickname was 'Calamity Kate' and that she was vindictive, untruthful and almost universally disliked by employees. Martin won the case, but was awarded damages of just £13s 4d suggesting considerable sympathy for Benson's viewpoint.

Martin initially concentrated on the family mining and quarrying interests instead, while Aston Martin – now without



Aston Martin CEO Dr Ulrich Bez and chairman David Richards at Henniker Mews with an Edwardian tricycle of the type Lionel Martin used to race

Martin initially modified a Singer 10 after Bamford & Martin was established. This 1913 advert notes Callow Street firm as an official repairer

There are reasons
why "the little car with a lot of luxury" is such a general favourite—

Let us quote a few—in the first place the

SINGER "10"

is the most reliable car of its power and class, as is undoubtedly proved by such remarkable performances as 25,000 miles in 26 weeks without a single mechanical trouble—in point of speed its many records have proved it to be supreme and—in the matter of hill-climbing capabilities—well, it has, on more than one occasion, put cars of higher power to shame.

And such is the vehicle we offer you—so let us send you Booklet, and note that the prices of the "little Singer" are—£195 and £204 - 15 - 0.

**SINGER & Co., Ltd., Coventry,
and 17, Holborn Viaduct, E.C.**

Official Repairers to the Company for Light Cars—
BAMFORD & MARTIN, Ltd.,
Callow St., Fulham Rd., London.

diplomatic incident by unofficially racing the German Reich minister of sport, General Adolf Hühnlein, when he tried to casually pass him. Hühnlein was in a supercharged Mercedes-Benz, Martin a Railton. The Railton won.

When the second world war broke out in 1939 – for reasons other than Lionel Martin humbling a high-ranking Nazi – motoring for sport or pleasure ceased. The 61-year-old returned to his first transport love, cycling. However, in 1943, he was taken seriously ill with diabetes, which curtailed his activities. He almost didn't recover but by 1944 was well enough to resume cycling. His wife was nervous about it at his advanced age and in blackout conditions. With, it seems, some justification; he was knocked off his tricycle later that year and ended up in hospital badly injured with broken bones. 'I made up my mind to be cheerful while lying in bed,' retorted Martin. 'I'll get on my trike once I'm invalided home.'

They were fateful words. On Sunday, 14 October 1945, while riding home, Martin was hit by a car once again, in Kingston upon Thames. This time it was far more serious and he died in Kingston County Hospital a week later, aged 67. He was buried in Putney Vale cemetery.

The man who gave his name to Aston Martin might have passed away, but the company he'd been absent from for 20 years continued. Just over a year later, it was bought by David Brown and reached heights that Lionel Martin could only have dreamt of. **AMD**

a hyphen – survived without him. He didn't even own an example of the marque. However, within a couple of years, he joined the British Racing Drivers' Club in an administrative capacity and bought a Riley Nine, which his wife raced at Brooklands and elsewhere, sometimes against Aston Martins. By 1929, the couple had moved on to an MG 18/80.

The Martins moved to Kingston upon Thames in 1932 and their participation in motorsport increased, with both of them competing in the 1933 Monte Carlo Rally; Mr Martin in a Humber Snipe and Mrs Martin in a Hillman Wizard. The two drove a Humber Twelve together in that year's Alpine Trial. A couple of years later, while surveying the route of the 1935 Alpine Rally for the RAC, he nearly caused a



Lionel Martin giving Aston-Martin its first win at Brooklands in AM 270, aka 'Bunny'

ASTON MARTIN DB7
**PASSING
JUDGEMENT**

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL WALTON

To introduce Aston Martin Driver's recently purchased DB7 3.2, we're taking it across one of the best roads in the UK, the Buttertubs Pass, high in the Yorkshire Dales






DECIDING ON which is the best road in the UK is a very subjective matter. Some say it's the A272 that cuts across the South Downs while for others it's the Cheddar Gorge in Somerset. For a minority, it's any road with a pub at the end.

For me, it has to be the Buttertubs Pass in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales. A seven-mile ribbon of tarmac that twists and turns its way through some of the most beautiful yet harshest scenery in the country, it's a real test for any car. It therefore makes it the ideal place to put the magazine's recently purchased 1997 DB7 3.2 coupe through its paces.

Even getting there is an adventure. With the road connecting the isolated villages of Simonstone and Muker, there's no easy or direct route and whichever direction ►







As the road drops even further down, to my right is a sheer drop that has only the thinnest of steel cables to stop me from tumbling over the edge. One wrong move here and it wouldn't be an AA truck I'd need to be recovered but a helicopter.

you take passes through some of the most empty and desolated countryside in England. Break down here and it'll be weeks before help arrives but sadly, that's a real possibility with this car.

A 25-year-old DB7 coupe with 93,500 miles on the clock, it's in physically reasonable good condition with only a few, barely noticeable marks on the black bodywork while the handsome, 12-spoke wheels are immaculate. The interior is clean and other than the dead oil pressure gauge – which is triggering a permanent oil warning light on the dash – everything works, although the driver's side electric window and the central locking have a mind of their own sometimes.

As soon as we bought the car, it was sent to respected DB7 expert, KWE of Thatcham near Reading (www.kwecars.com), to refurbish the rattling supercharger since new ones are now difficult to find. At the same time, the radius arms and bushes were also replaced plus the location of a minor power steering fluid leak was identified and repaired.

After I collected the car from Kelsey Publishing's head office in Kent a few weeks later, the engine cut out while on the M11 and wouldn't restart. The AA patrolman soon diagnosed a faulty alternator, swapping the now dead battery for one with power, which allowed me to finish my journey. Although there were problems sourcing a replacement, a new alternator was eventually fitted by my local garage, Express Autocare (www.expressautocare.co.uk).

And finally, when I was returning home from Yorkshire following the photoshoot for this feature, the engine stopped once again, this time on the A1(M1) close to the junction with the M62. Due to being surrounded by fast motorways, other than a safari park's lion enclosure, I can't think of a more dangerous place to break down. Thankfully the car and I were soon recovered to the safety of a nearby services, although it did take another four hours to be collected and transported home. But when the car was delivered to Express Autocare the following day, the technician quickly discovered the crank position sensor had simply popped off. It's unknown why this happened; I'm hoping it simply wasn't put on properly and not

DRIVE STORY

DB7 3.2

1997 DB7 3.2

Engine: 3,239cc, 6cyl SC

Power: 335bhp

Torque: 361lb ft

0-60mph: 5.8secs

Top speed: 165mph

Transmission: 4-spd auto

Price new: £82,500

Value now: £20,000-£30,000

the sign of a larger issue. Yet despite the problems, I still love the car. How could I not when it looks this good? Unarguably one of the most beautiful coupes from the last 30 years, its smooth, curvaceous yet classic design hasn't dated as much as others from the era, including, in my view, the more angular BMW 8-Series. Yet the DB7 is also relatively spacious for a low-slung sports car, offering a perfect driving position while the leather-trimmed seats are big and supportive.

Although even when new the 3.2-litre supercharged straight-six was never the most refined of engines – it is an old Jaguar unit originally from the Eighties after all – the car still cruises effortlessly at 70mph on the motorway with plenty of torque left for sudden overtaking.

The one area that has never impressed me with the DB7 is its interior. Not the design, simply laid out, it's relatively easy to use although it's difficult to operate the cruise control without looking down since the buttons are awkwardly located in front of the armrest. What I dislike most is the amount of switchgear swiped from Ford's parts bins for a car that in 1997

cost £82,500. I drove a 1991 Fiesta RS Turbo not long before this feature and many of the DB7's controls appear to be identical.

After leaving the A1(M) at Scotch Corner and then negotiating the quiet Yorkshire roads, I eventually reach Simonstone, a village so small it makes Brigadoon look positively cosmopolitan by comparison. I'm soon on Cliff Gate Road that's more commonly known as the Buttertubs Pass and with the view ahead of me emptier than the Russian Tundra, I squeeze the throttle hard, waking the supercharger for a sudden burst of acceleration. Although the DB7 isn't quick by today's standards, officially reaching 60mph in 5.8 seconds when fitted with the automatic 'box like this one, the acceleration still feels crisp, the sensation



DRIVE STORY

DB7 3.2

heightened by the growing wail of the supercharger. Although slow from low speed, when on the move the straight-six always feels free-revving and eager, delivering a relatively smooth, lag-free surge forward the moment I ask for it.

It's about now when the road starts to climb; at 526m (1,726ft) above sea level, the Buttertubs Pass is one of the highest roads in England and the steep incline is starting to stunt the car's acceleration. Despite the engine producing a healthy 335bhp, I need to keep my foot hard to the floor to retain any kind of momentum.

When the road eventually levels out, I'm surrounded in every direction by stunning vistas over the Wensleydale countryside. With its dramatic peaks and never-ending views, I start to feel like I'm in a scene from either *Game of Thrones* or *All Creatures Great and Small*, which was filmed in the area but featured fewer dragons.

As the road starts to straighten, I bury the throttle once again, forcing the always slow-to-act, dim-witted four-speed automatic box to kick down. Even in the mid-Nineties, when most other sports cars of the age were fitted with five-speed 'boxes, a four-speed unit was considered old-fashioned. The Jaguar XK8, for example, that arrived in 1996 and cost £34,500 less than the DB7 had one extra gear.

Steel-bodied, and at 1,750kg the DB7 is relatively heavy and therefore lacks the agility and nimbleness of the 993-generation of Porsche 911 or the later Aston Martin V8 Vantage. The grip, though, is always excellent while the accurate and sharp steering allows me to navigate a fast S-bend quickly, the car only suffering from minor body roll.

Yet based on the same chassis as one of the smoothest handling coupes in the world, the XJ-S, the DB7's ride is also excellent. The familiar Jaguar-style suspension set-up of double wishbones at the front with a lower wishbone and driveshafts acting as upper links at the back, perfectly absorbs the worst surfaces this isolated road has to offer.

After I race across the top, the wail of the supercharger no doubt mistaken by anyone who heard it as an incoming Exocet missile, the road starts to descend and it's somewhere around here where the Buttertubs Pass gets its name. Close



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DRIVE STORY

DB7 3.2

by are 20m deep holes in the limestone where farmers would apparently drop the butter into they'd produced to keep it cool while resting on their way to market. So perhaps a better name would be the Big Fridge Pass.

As the road drops even further down, to my right is a sheer drop that has only the thinnest of steel cables to stop me from tumbling over the edge. One wrong move here and it wouldn't be an AA truck I'd need to be recovered but a helicopter.

The fear of death aside, the scenery on this side of the pass is just as spectacular,

the endless rolling hills of Swaledale totally filling the screen. But due to a hairpin that's similar in shape to that of the Monaco Grand Prix circuit but with more sheep, I don't have time to enjoy them. Once again, the accurate steering allows me to scythe quickly through the sharp corner before I'm hard on the throttle for a long, flowing straight that ends all too soon at a T-junction. After turning right, I drive slowly into Muker, another pretty little village that gets its unusual name from the Old Norse for 'the narrow newly cultivated field'. You can say what you like about the Norse, but they were literal when it

came to their place names. Although the Buttertubs Pass is a mere seven miles long, it's still an exhilarating journey and one that offers similar challenges to a racing circuit yet all the adventure of a Duke of Edinburgh Award hike across the hills. It's also been the perfect place to test our new purchase. Although far from perfect – two breakdowns in less than a month prove that – the road has still shown it to be a quick, comfortable and likable car.

So, while it's conjecture as to which is the best drivers' road in the UK, when it comes to the best sports coupe of the Nineties, there's clearly no argument. **AMD**



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By Matt James
Editor,
Motorsport News



Good things come to those who wait

We look at the difficult season to date for Aston Martin
in Formula 1 and its potential for improvement



ASTON MARTIN is the envy of many other teams on the Formula 1 grid. That might seem odd for an operation that is bouncing around in the mid-pack and one that has had to essentially rework its car in the middle of the season.

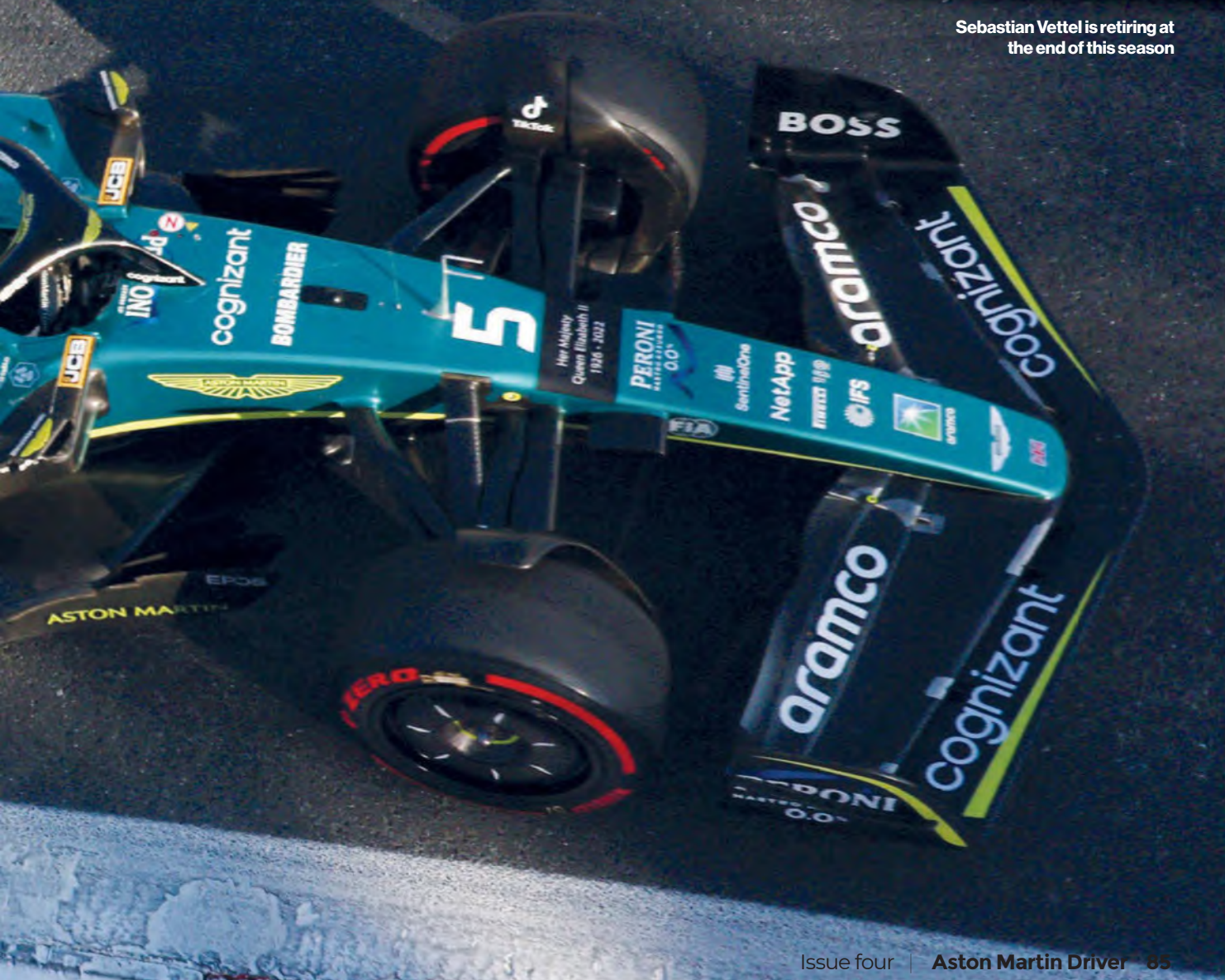
Drivers Sebastian Vettel and Lance Stroll have struggled to worry the frontrunners in the AMR22 chassis, which has proven to be recalcitrant. But the portents for the Silverstone-based squad are still on an upward trajectory.

The deep pockets of owner Lawrence Stroll are expected to make it one of the best funded outfits on the grid and progress will come. It has just taken much longer than expected.

The huge rules reset, which each grand prix operation had to cope with at the start



Sebastian Vettel is retiring at the end of this season



MOTORSPORT

AM's 2022 SEASON

of 2022, caused furrowed brows among many of the teams and it is something which has served to knock Aston Martin off course this year. The move towards under-car ground effect as a means of generating downforce (rather than complex wings) was designed to help the cars follow each other and overtake – and hence improve the racing – but it required much grey matter from the engineers.

Aston Martin was not alone in being caught out by the technical aspects of the new regulations. Ferrari and, most notably, Mercedes, dropped the ball as the extra aerodynamic efficiency under the car has caused what is known as 'porpoising', where the suspension oscillates wildly as it tries to cope with the downforce generated underneath the chassis and it attaches and detaches the amount of downforce on the car.

By the Spanish Grand Prix in late May, the Aston Martin team revamped its original AMR22 design and followed some cues from the all-conquering Red Bull squad. While that arrested much of the original design flaws in the chassis, the team was already too far behind the rest to make much of an impact.

That means attention has already turned to 2023, with the rest of this campaign being virtually written off.

And there was another seismic change too when lead driver Vettel announced in August that he was going to retire from grand prix racing. The German's announcement was swiftly followed by news that Spaniard Fernando Alonso was switching over from the Renault-funded Alpine effort to line up in British Racing Green next term.

Hiring Alonso is another staging post for Aston. The two-time world champion is no spring chicken at 41 years old, but his expertise and title-winning knowledge is something which the top brass at Aston are desperate to buy into. But Alonso's arrival also means that the heat will be on.

Team principal Mike Krack knows as much. In a recent interview with the BBC, he explains: "[Alonso] can push us, more than a driver who does not have that calibre. It will maybe be much more difficult than it is now. We discussed this. We said, 'What are the pros and cons?' And we came to the conclusion that it is the right step."

Alonso is, without question, a highly talented driver but his demands are notorious. He will insist on excellence from the squad and expects it to be delivered.

"It will be challenging for us," says Krack. "Normally, drivers with this experience, they do not have this desire to win. This desire goes down [with time], especially if they have won already.

"[But] Fernando has this unique combination of speed, hunger, motivation and experience. For us, it makes the perfect candidate. The downside could be that if the car we deliver is just not good enough, then we know it gets difficult. But it gets difficult with every driver if the car is not fast enough.

"We think having someone like Fernando is really, really important to make the next step as a team. You need to learn to manage champions, which we already did with Sebastian. Because these drivers are very demanding, they are quite difficult to manage. I would not even say Sebastian is that difficult to manage if you are transparent, honest and straight. And I think the same goes for Fernando.

"Difficulties arise when expectation does not match deliverables, or when it's not outspoken. He knows very well when he comes here that we will probably not win the first race together.

"But he can be assured we give it everything and we will listen to what he has to say. And if we cannot deliver on something we have to tell him, open and transparently: 'Look, this we cannot do. With all possibilities, this is what we can do next.' I think if we have this kind of dialogue, it is not going to be problematic."

While the driver situation is clear in 2023, there are still growing pains that the team needs to go through. Lawrence Stroll's investment in the team came on stream in 2019 when the squad was still called Racing Point. Billionaire Stroll's ambitions are huge and he promised a sizeable revamp (and refunding) of the team to bring it up to the levels of Mercedes, Red Bull and Ferrari. That's why a seat with the race team is so highly cherished despite its current malaise.

The new HQ that is being built and the huge recruitment drive to gather the

Aston's team principle, Mike Krack



expert brains' trust that is needed to reach the top has all been signed off, but the global health pandemic put the brakes on the practicalities of that. The good times are coming, but they are taking longer to arrive than anyone expected.

The pressure is inevitable in Formula 1 but having such a driven and ambitious owner means that all at the Aston Martin team are under the spotlight.

The team principal Krack is prime among those who will be feeling the heat should the results not come, but growing the squad at such a rapid rate is also something that has to be managed properly. It is not a case of throwing cash at any problem; there needs to be careful strategic planning put in place to make sure

that the expansions do not detract from the key strengths that are already in place at HQ.

"If you grow very fast, the whole structure cannot adapt so quickly," Krack told the BBC. "Normally you reduce the efficiency if you grow too quickly and this is something that has happened. The [2022 car] concept that was decided was a direction that offered ultimately very high aerodynamic potential but due to porpoising it could never be exploited."

The revamp in Spain has helped the team move up the grid in terms of its pace but, at the moment, it is baby steps. Scoring points on a regular basis is seen as a positive achievement but it is a long way from where the operation wants to be in the longer term.

"Difficulties arise when expectation does not match deliverables, or when it's not outspoken."

"The reason we are improving is we have identified the technical weaknesses of the car and we worked hard on eliminating them and one after the other, some in parallel," explains Krack. "One is car weight, one is feedback to the drivers, and one is aerodynamic performance and we improved all areas and we continue to improve them.

"The rate of change and the developments we have taken to this point give me good confidence that we can continue this to the end of this season."

Stroll Snr has been around motorsport for many seasons overseeing the career of his son Lance, and so he knows that not all of his demands will be met overnight – particularly given the impact of COVID-19.

Krack, though, says that the owner is still in the background, pushing the team to its limits. Stroll said in an interview recently that he has never failed in any of his business ventures and Aston Martin in F1 would be no different. That's fighting talk in anyone's language.

"The financial means [Lawrence] has put into this team give him the right to be demanding. But he is not over-pressurising us," explains Krack. "He is around once a week or something like that, and wants to know what is going on, what are the next steps, why have we performed the way we did, what do we do next, and what is our strategy? And then after two hours he has other things to do. It is not that he comes in and decides every single item, not at all.

"It is justified to give your chairman an update every week at least. There are also phone calls in between but they are more like catch-ups. But, bottom line, I admire his patience, honestly. Because success has not come the way he wanted it from the beginning, and the patience he has shown shows he is realistic and understands what he is doing." **AMD**



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MARQUE OF RESPECT

The Aston Advantage might be a reasonably new specialist, but Rupert Keyzar has been around the marque for longer than he can remember, including when his family owned the most famous example in the world during the Sixties and Seventies

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY: PAUL WALTON

ALTHOUGH THE Aston Advantage is still relatively new, since Rupert Keyzar has been passionate about the marque for longer than he can remember, it feels just as established as the well-known companies where he first learnt his trade during the Nineties.

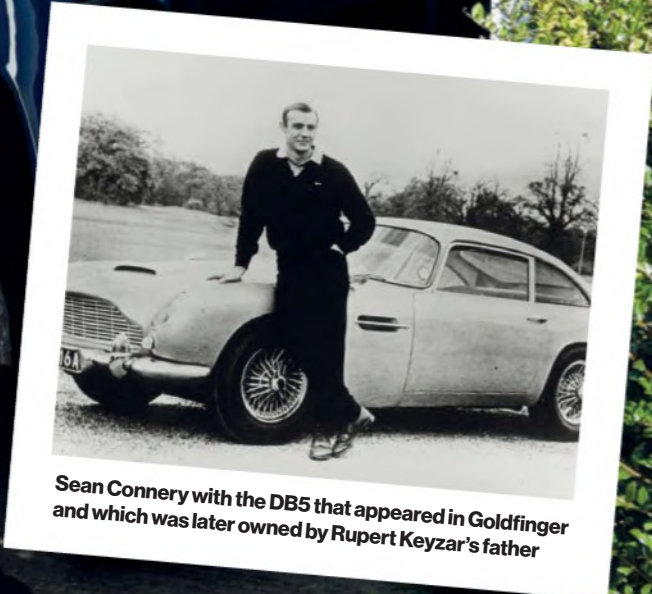
"I want us to be the continuation of those old-school Aston Martin firms, the same ones I started at 30 years ago," explains

Rupert. "I'm now in a position to carry on their traditions to the next generation."

Rupert's association with the marque goes back a long way, before he was even born. "My father had already bought the original DB5 that appeared in the James Bond film, Goldfinger, when my mother was expecting me," he explains. "He purchased the car directly from Aston during the summer of 1968 after it had been converted back to standard."

Incredibly, originally priced at £2,250, Keyzar Snr managed to knock this down to just £1,800. Due to having all the paperwork to confirm the car's role in both Bond films, Rupert's father – a successful businessman who had always had a love of Astons – together with his brother, an electrical engineer, ►





Sean Connery with the DB5 that appeared in Goldfinger and which was later owned by Rupert Keyzar's father

MEET THE SPECIALIST

THE ASTON ADVANTAGE



reinstalled the gadgets. “He had fun with the car,” says Rupert with a laugh. “He would often park it and change the numberplates to confuse traffic wardens.”

After seeing how much the promotional cars were now worth and needing to buy a larger house for his growing family, Rupert’s father sold the Bond DB5 in 1972 for £8,000. Later stolen while being stored in an airport warehouse during the late Nineties, despite recent reports to the contrary, the location of arguably the most famous car in the world still isn’t known.

“People often say Astons are in their blood, that it’s genetic, but in my case, it really is – there are photographs of my mum sitting in the car when she was expecting me.”

Sadly too young to remember this famous Aston, it was one of his father’s later models – a pre-production V8 Vantage Volante with a prototype X-Pack engine – that really ignited Rupert’s passion for the marque. “That was an amazing piece of kit and my goodness was it loud, popping and banging on the over-run with flames shooting out of the exhaust.”

Always wanting to be involved with Astons professionally, Rupert spent the Nineties working for a variety of established specialists including RS Williams, Pugsley & Lewis and HWM where he became parts manager.

Although his career took another direction when he became a marine surveyor in the mid-2000s, Rupert always had an ambition to return to working with Aston Martins, preferably in sales. And earlier this year, he got his chance.

Rupert has known John Watson from the Hampshire-based specialist, Chicane, since their time at RS Williams. Starting in the 2000s, Chicane was already involved with



most aspects of Aston Martin ownership including servicing, repairs, restoration, upgrades and even racing. But there was one key area missing from that portfolio.

“I popped in to see John at Chicane and now here we are.”

Although the subsequent venture, The Aston Advantage, is located in a building within Chicane’s expansive site, Rupert stresses it is a separate company. Yet the two concerns still work closely together since all of the cars offered for sale are inspected and, where necessary, serviced by Chicane’s technicians. “If you’re involved in Aston Martin sales,” explains Rupert, “you need to be aligned or have a connection with a specialist since it gives the buyer confidence the car is right and correct.” Rupert will also sell cars on behalf of Chicane’s customers.

When he shows me three of the examples he currently has for sale, including a DB5, DB6 Vantage and rare DB7 GTA, I comment on how beautifully they’re presented. “Every car needs to be very high quality,” he explains, “all with a clean body, a strong chassis, solid mechanics and with all systems working.”

Although happy to deal in all models, Rupert plans to mainly specialise in classic cars, with the 2001-2007 Vanquish being the cut-off point. “My interest is in the older models, to keep them going, to get that passion out to people and show what these models are capable of,” he explains. “Knowledge of the older cars is getting rarer now so I want to carry on that tradition into the next generation.”

Still relatively small, Rupert has plans to grow The Aston Advantage but without losing the passion he’s always had throughout his life and career for Aston Martin. “These cars can sell themselves,” he admits. “But if you’re really passionate about the cars and someone is interested, that passion will always get them over the line.” **AMD**

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THE ASTON ADVANTAGE

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Do you have a classic DB, V8 or Virage model that you are considering selling? Then do pay us a visit with your car for a free, initial inspection and valuation. Hampshire country roads love an Aston.

1969 DB6 Restored to Vantage Specification - £495,000

Colours can make a car - and this DB6 does just that in striking metallic Aquamarine Blue. Comprehensively restored by marque experts Chicane, this car has a 4.2 litre Vantage specification engine, some subtle suspension modifications have been added and the interior benefits from a discreetly installed modern air conditioning system. A GT in every sense, but with a twist.



2003 DB7 GTA (a definite future classic) - £42,500

One of the rarest DB7s with only 112 made in total, with this car being 1 of only 60 RHD UK cars ever made. This imposing and last hurrah to a much loved Aston Martin model comes in a striking colour combination and has covered 53,507 miles.



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ASTON MARTIN *driver* Reader Survey

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/aston22

Fill out our reader survey, and to thank you, we'll enter you into our free prize draw for the chance to win one of three John Lewis vouchers worth £100 each!



Whether it's how many DB4s were made or how much power the DB7 Vantage produces, facts and figures are important to us here at Aston Martin Driver.

But just as important is what we know about you. From what cars you own to your favourite type of holiday, we want to know more about your interests so we can tailor the magazine accordingly.

To achieve this, we've put together this short survey which can either be filled out here and posted to us or completed online at www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/aston22

Either way, we'll enter you into a prize draw for the chance to win one of three £100 John Lewis vouchers.

We're looking forward to hearing from you!

Paul Walton
Editor

10. Do you use a specialist motor insurance provider?

- Yes (please specify which provider)
- I don't, but I would consider a specialist insurer
- No, I generally wouldn't consider a specialist insurer
- If yes, please specify which provider here

- Between £3,500 and £4,000
- Between £4,000 and £4,500
- Between £4,500 and £5,000
- Over £5,000
- I don't own a car

15. How much would you estimate you spend on detailing products each year?

- Less than £50
- Between £50 and £100
- More than £100
- I don't spend on detailing

16. Do you have breakdown cover?

- Yes, (please specify the brand)
- No, but I am considering one
- No, I don't and I don't need one
- If yes, please specify which provider here

1. How many cars do you have in your household?

.....

2. Please list all the car marques you own e.g. Ford, Aston Martin...

.....
.....
.....

3. How did you purchase your last car?

- Bought new from main dealer
 - Bought used from main dealer
 - Bought via traditional auction house, e.g. BCA, Manheim
 - Bought via specialist auction house, e.g. Silverstone Auctions, SWVA, Historics, WB & Sons, Brightwells
 - Bought via online auction, e.g. carandclassic, collecting cars, The Market etc
 - Bought from an online retailer, e.g. Carwow, Cinch, Cazoo
 - Bought privately
 - Other (please specify)
-

4. When was it obtained?

- Within the last 3 Months
- 4-6 Months ago
- 7-12 Months ago
- 1-2 Years ago
- 3-4 Years ago
- More than 4 Years ago
- I don't own a car

5. How much did your last car cost you?

- Up to £5,000
- Between £5,000 and £10,000
- Between £10,000 and £20,000
- Between £20,000 and £40,000
- Between £40,000 and £60,000
- Between £60,000 and £100,000
- More than £100,000
- I don't own a car

6. What would you say is the total value of all your cars?

- Up to £10,000
- Between £10,000 and £20,000
- Between £20,000 and £40,000
- Between £40,000 and £60,000
- Between £60,000 and £100,000
- Between £100,000 and £150,000
- Between £150,000 and £200,000
- More than £200,000
- I don't own a car

7. Are you considering buying any of the following cars in the next 2 years?

(PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY)

- Yes, definitely a new car
- Yes, definitely an approved used car
- Yes, definitely a second hand car
- Quite likely, a new car
- Quite likely, an approved used car
- Quite likely, a second hand car
- It's possible, but unlikely
- No

8. Would you buy at an auction? Or have you in the past?

- Yes, I would buy at an auction, and have previously done so
- Yes, I would consider buying at an auction, but haven't previously done so
- It's possible, but unlikely that I'd buy at an auction
- No, I wouldn't consider buying at an auction

9. Have you ever used a specialist car finance provider for a purchase?

- Yes, I have used a specialist car finance provider in the past
- No, I haven't used a specialist car finance provider, but would consider it
- No, it's unlikely I'd consider a specialist car finance provider

11. Which of the following are things do you use your car(s) for?

	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	N/A
Car shows	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Occasional drives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participating in car shows	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Track days	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Concours competitions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Car rallies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Owner's Clubs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. How often do you go to car-related social gatherings, like events, meets, shows, competitions, clubs and so on - per year?

Please enter the number of times, using an estimated number if needed.....

13. When your car needs work, what types of car-related products do you personally make the final brand decision on?

- Tyre make
 - Wheels
 - Oil brand
 - Detailing products brand
 - Brakes / suspension In-car entertainment
 - Exhaust-related parts
 - Other (please specify)
-

14. Taking a moment to think about it, what's your approximate car-related spend per year?

We're not including purchase or insurance here, just work and maintenance and so on, whether you do the work yourself or pay someone else to.

- Less than £500
- Between £500 and £1,000
- Between £1,000 and £1,500
- Between £1,500 and £2,000
- Between £2,000 and £2,500
- Between £2,500 and £3,000
- Between £3,000 and £3,500

Its easier and quicker to complete online at www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/aston22

17. When it comes to detailing, what are your preferred or favourite brand(s)?

	Always	Sometimes	Never but would consider	Never	N/A
Autoglym	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gtechniq	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CarPro	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meguiars	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Angelwax	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alchemy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gyeon	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify).....					

18. Regarding in-car entertainment, can you give us your personal score for the following brands on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is 'very poor' and 5 is 'excellent'?

	Always	Sometimes	Never but would consider	Never	N/A
Alpine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bose	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bowers & Wilkins	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Retrosounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Audison	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Focal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sony	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pioneer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kenwood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
JVC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

19. Do you own an add-on satnav?

- Yes, (please specify the brand)
- No, I don't but I am considering one
- No, I don't and I don't need one
- If yes, please specify which provider here

20. Would you say you're in the market for in-car entertainment within the next 2 years?

- Yes, I definitely am
- It's possible, I might be
- It's unlikely
- No

21. Thinking of breaks, holiday and travel, how often do you travel with your car, or to car-related destinations per year, as a break/holiday?

Car Rallies.....
 Motorsport events.....
 Driving holidays.....

22. How many watches do you own?

.....

23. Please list all the watch brands you own

.....

24. Is one a smartwatch?

- Yes
- No

25. Would you say you're in the market for another watch, in the next 2 years?

- Yes, I'd say I am in the market for a new watch
- It's possible, but unlikely
- No, I'm not looking to buy a watch within the next 2 years

26. Are you in the market for a new smartwatch, over the next 2 years?

- Yes, I definitely am
- It's possible, I might be
- It's unlikely
- No

27. We're interested to know if you have, or are interested in, any of the following financial products or services. Please tick all that apply:

- Wealth management
- Private health
- Life insurance
- Income protection
- Wine/spirits investments
- Other

28. We touched on car-related holidays and events earlier.

Specifically on general holidays, how many would you say you typically take each year (without a pandemic getting in the way) of the following types?

Breaks in the UK

 Breaks in Europe

 Breaks further afield

29. And what would you say are your favourite types of break?

- Package holidays
- Beach/Resort
- Countryside
- Lakes & Mountains
- City Break
- Coach Tour
- Escorted Tour
- Sea Cruise
- Golfing
- Backpacking
- Multi-Country Tour
- Safari
- Skiing/Winter Sports
- Spas/Health Spas
- Boating/Sailing Holiday
- Watersports
- Other Theme Park
- Camping
- Holiday Centre (e.g. Centre Parcs)
- Other

30. Do you have any subscription boxes e.g. beer, food, pet supplies? If yes, which ones?

.....

ABOUT YOU

31. Which area of the UK do you live?

- North East
- North West
- Yorkshire and the Humber
- East Midlands
- West Midlands

- East of England
- London
- South East
- South West
- Wales
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland
- I don't live in the UK

32. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- I prefer not to self-identify
- I prefer not to say

33. What is your age?

.....

34. Employment status

- Working full time
- Working full time
- Working part time
- Not working - Retired
- Not working - Unemployed
- Not working - Full time homemaker / parent
- Not working - Full time student
- Long term illness/disabled
- None of the above

35. How many children, under the age of 16, are in your home?

.....

36. What is your gross household income (before tax)?

- Less than £10,000
- £10,000 - £19,999
- £20,000 - £29,999
- £30,000 - £39,999
- £40,000 - £49,999
- £50,000 - £74,999
- £75,000 - £99,999
- £100,000 - £150,000
- Over £150,000

37. What is the total value of the savings and investments of all members of your household?

- Less than £5,000
- £5,000 - £9,999
- £10,000 - £24,999
- £25,000 - £49,999
- £50,000 - £74,999
- £75,000 - £99,999
- £100,000 - £149,999
- £150,000 - £199,999
- £200,000 - £250,000
- £250,000 or more

NEARLY FINISHED

38. Thanks for completing our survey. Please provide your details for entry into our free prize draw for the chance to win one of three John Lewis vouchers worth £100 each*

*This prize draw is for the Kelsey Media motoring reader surveys featured in Classic Porsche, Jaguar World, 911 & Porsche World, Aston Martin Driver, Classic Jaguar and Total BMW magazines.

Entries close 1st January 2023. The winners will be drawn on 3rd January 2023 and contacted within three working days.

Name

email

Phone number

The editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered in to.

*Full Kelsey Media Competition – Terms of Entry can be viewed here www.kelsey.co.uk/competition-terms-conditions/.

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ON SALE
6 JANUARY



DBR1 RE-CREATION

Based on a 1966 DB6, this faithful re-creation of Aston Martin's successful racer gets close to the real thing



DB7 VS BMW 840i

Despite both being powerful two-door coupes from the Nineties, these are two very different cars. Which do we prefer?



DB MK III

As the first Aston to feature the famous grille, the Mk III is an important car in the company's history. We look at its development

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CURRENT LISTINGS

ASTON MARTIN V8



1974, £99,950. Finished in original Kentucky blue with bark blue trim this car was purchased from Work Service some tow years ago for the purpose of taking part in Classic Rally's in Europe. The most recent being the Gataag Rally in 2020. But due to limited use the car is now for sale. Prior to its use the owner spent over £50,000 on engine rebuild, suspension upgrade and AP braking system. Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)

116558

ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE



1998, POA. Registered 20th May 1998 this Supercharged Vantage to full V600 'works dynamics' specification is finished in the most desirable colour combinations of Royal blue metallic with parchment piped blue leather and dark blue carpets. Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)

116560

ASTON MARTIN DBS



1969, £145,000. Registered 1st August 1969 this Aston Martin DBS coupe has been residing in France over recent years. Prior to this the history file includes details of engine and suspension rebuilds. Where MOT certificates indicate very little use over the last 15 years, the car has more recently benefited from a replacement five speed Tremec gearbox, a full repaint in California Sage and a complete interior re trim. Supplied fully serviced with 12 months MOT. Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)

116562

ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE



2007, £39,950. Finished in the most desirable colour of Onyx Black with Obsidian Black leather and a black mohair hood this car has had just two previous owners, has covered just 48000 miles with full dealer and specialist service history with no expense spared. The car is powered by the 4.3 litre V8 engine and 'sport shift' manual gearbox. In 2016 the car had a replacement clutch fitted and has covered just 6000 miles since. For a full driving experience and walk round video click the link below or go to the Oselli you tube channel. Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)

116559

ASTON MARTIN DB7



2004, £279,000. The DB7 Zagato was introduced at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance in August 2002 and later shown at the Paris Motor Show the following October. It was only offered for the 2003 model year, with a limited run of 99 cars built (a 100th car was produced for the Aston Martin museum), all of which immediately sold out. Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)

116561

ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE



£125,000. First registered 22/06/2015 Aston Martin Vantage S sport shift, finished in the most stunning colour combination of Sunburst Yellow with Obsidian black leather with yellow features and stitching along with a black mohair hood. Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)

116568



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OR FIND YOUR NEXT!

ASTON MARTIN VIRAGE



£125,000. Finished in Royal blue metallic with parchment piped blue leather trim and blue carpets this monster Virage 6.3 manual gearbox muscle car is not for the faint hearted. This low mileage example of the massive Aston Martin Works service upgrade is the second car to be completed back in the day. Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)
116569

ASTON MARTIN V8 VANTAGE



£399,000. Here we have a very unique V8 rebuilt at no expense spared in developing the car into a 450 + BHP (with 520 ft lb or torque), super Vantage fuel injection car. Finished in Cumberland Grey, 'Black Connolly' trim, with contrasting grey carpets, (James Bond Living Daylights Spec). Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)
116570

ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH



£59,995. A new Aston Martin for the 21st Century, the V12-engined Vanquish coupé debuted at the Geneva Auto Show in March 2001. Styled by Ian Callum, the man responsible for the DB7, the Vanquish was inspired by one of Aston Martin's most celebrated models: the DB4 GT Zagato. Debuted in the DB7 Vantage, and Aston Martin's first power unit of its type. Please call 01798 874477, South East. (T)
116685

ASTON MARTIN DB7 i6



1998, 57,500 miles, £29,995. Petrol, automatic, Pentland green. Please call 01798 874477, Sussex. (T)

ASTON MARTIN DB2



1955, £140,000. Aston Martin DB 2/4 Mk1 completely restored in original Moonbeam Grey with red leather interior. Period upgrade include 4Litre Vantage engine, 5 speed gear box, disc brakes, etc. In current ownership for past 42 years. Please call 01483 486379, South East. (T)

ASTON MARTIN DB4



1960, £549,995. An outstanding Series II Aston Martin DB4. The body is exceptional, the paintwork is pristine, chrome work outstanding and the engine bay first class. The interior has a wonderful high-quality yet aged feel to it, everything works correctly and on the road this Aston Martin DB4 Series II is quite simply outstanding. Please call 01944 758000, London. (T)

ASTON MARTIN DB6



1967, £299,995. DB6 manual coupe. Red with black interior. Good history and low (relative) mileage. Service history will follow but the car is fully serviced by Oselli with 12 month's MoT. Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)

ASTON MARTIN DB7



£279,000. The DB7 Zagato was introduced at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance in August 2002 and later shown at the Paris Motor Show the following October. Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)

ASTON MARTIN DB6



1967, £170,000. A generally good, smart, sound example, but offered as a project, due to a seized engine and the need for re-commissioning. Please call 01248 602649, Wales. (T)
114827

ASTON MARTIN *drivers*

Robin Hamilton's DBS-based RHAM1 was the first Aston Martin to race at an international level since the Sixties.

THROUGHOUT the Seventies, Aston Martin was more concerned about survival than a return to racing, yet that didn't stop a British car dealer and marque enthusiast to do just that. Robin Hamilton's 1977 Le Mans effort might have been on a meagre budget, but it was the first appearance of the marque at the famous race since 1964.

Born in Bournemouth in May 1947, after leaving school Hamilton completed an engineering apprenticeship with Rolls-Royce while also selling used sports cars – including Astons – on the side. When Rolls-Royce went bust in 1971, he decided to concentrate on selling used cars, eventually becoming an official Aston Martin service dealer three years later and a distributor in 1977.

To promote the business, Hamilton raced a DB4GT, moving to a 1970 DBS V8 (chassis number 10038) in 1974. "Even though it was unsuited to being thrown around," he said during a 2011 interview with *Motorsport* magazine, "it had an engine we knew intimately, so we set about developing that and the rest of the car."

After a good showing at club level, Hamilton set his sights on the Le Mans 24 Hours. Although Aston Martin took an interest, making several members of its technical staff available for advice, it was Hamilton's own team that developed the DBS into an endurance racer. The changes were substantial and included an aero package plus several uprated engine components.

Now bearing the chassis number RHAM1 (Robin Hamilton Aston Martin)

but known informally as 'The Muncher' due to its appetite for brake discs, the modified DBS made its competition debut at the 1977 Silverstone Six Hours when Hamilton shared the driving with rallycross driver, Dave Preece. The car was immediately quick with the pair reaching the top ten when the diff overheated, cooking the oil seals.

And then came Le Mans. Despite being the heaviest car on the grid at 1,516kg (earning it the nickname *Le Petit Carnion*), the car never missed a beat and together with veteran racer, Mike Salmon, Hamilton finished a fine 17th overall and third in the GTP class. "Afterwards there was genuine enthusiasm for what we had done," continued Hamilton in 2011. "The press had written us off before we got to France so the sense of achievement was amazing."

After rebuilding the V8 with two Garrett turbochargers, the car didn't race again until the 1979 Silverstone Six Hours when Derek Bell joined Hamilton and Preece. Due to delays caused by a small fire, they finished 13th.

For Le Mans, Hamilton shared the car (now featuring a cut-down roof and reprofiled nose) with Preece and Salmon, but it retired after 21 laps due to an oil leak. RHAM1 (and Hamilton) had one more outing when Bell joined him

for the 1980 Silverstone Six Hours but didn't finish due to a rear hub failure.

Hamilton was by now involved in building a prototype sports car called the Nimrod. Designed by Eric Broadley of Lola fame, although the chassis was ready in 1979, insufficient funds meant the project was put on hold. It wasn't until 1981 when Victor Gauntlett – who had taken a 50 percent stake in Aston Martin – agreed to support the project, that Hamilton got it going again.

Gauntlett demanded engines from Aston Martin's Tickford subsidiary were used, which weren't always reliable. At the car's first race at the 1982 Silverstone Six Hours, a camshaft top chain tensioner came loose. At Le Mans, a tyre blow-out, resulted in a crash.

The team limped through another season before closing its doors at the end of 1983. Hamilton moved away from racing, turning his attention to environmental ventures.

Although Hamilton never won a race or even topped the leader board, he still achieved something Aston Martin itself couldn't do; take the name back to international racing. "I look back at our first attempt at Le Mans with a range of emotions, including horror. I don't know how we did it with what we had; so much could have gone wrong." **AMD**



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