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ISSUE 01
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DRIVER

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of them all *See page 14*



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Waffing along behind the three pointed star is, to many, a sign that they have made it in life. To others, it's a constant reminder of the adage that one should choose once and choose well; because there is little more reliable than an old Merc. But whatever your reasons for loving Mercedes-Benz, you're not alone.

Welcome to Issue 1 of Mercedes Driver. Our team of experts will help to guide you through the experience of owning a Mercedes – from tinkering and days out through to marque comparisons. But we need your help to make this magazine as good as it can be. If you have an opinion on the world of motoring, write to us. If you have a car that you think warrants a feature, get in touch with us. If you'd like to suggest ways we can make this better for you, tell us – we want to make this magazine about you and your passion, and we need you to do that.

We look forward to hearing from you.
For now – enjoy this issue!

Sam Skelton Editor



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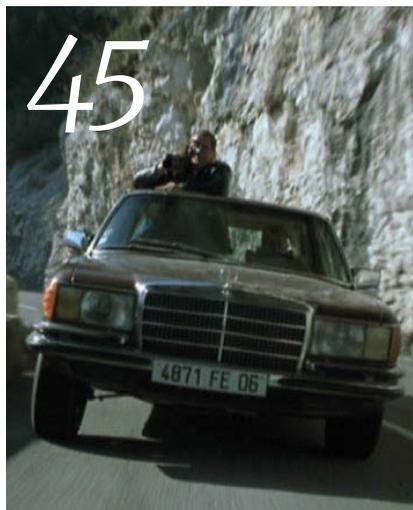
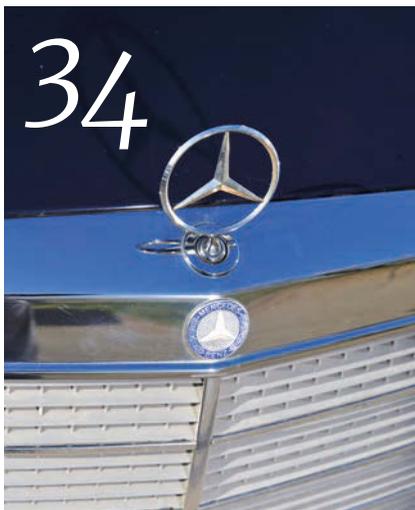
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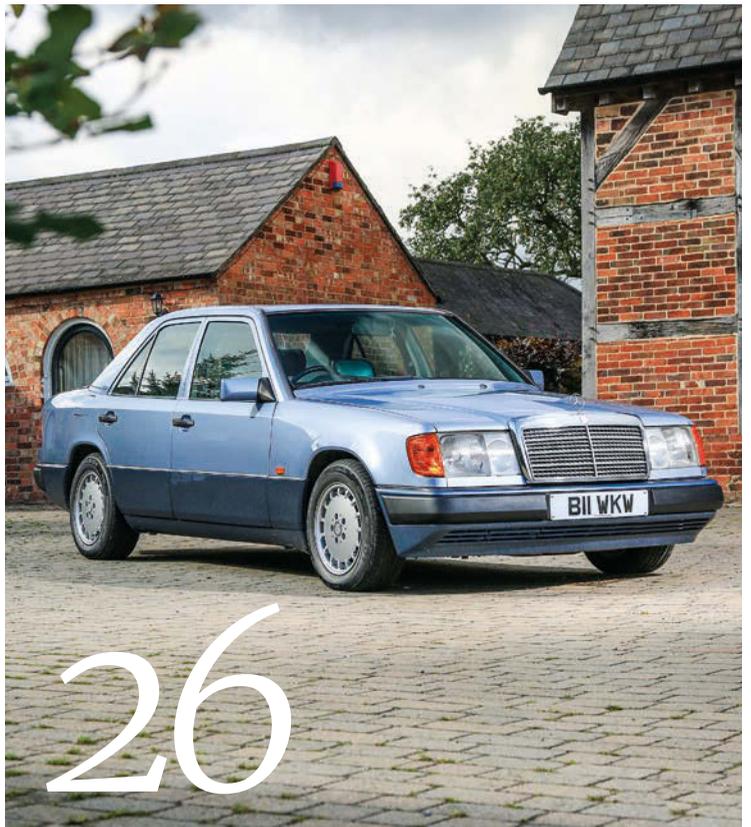




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1955 Cadillac Coupe de Ville. White, Turquoise hide, show condition. £ 34,500



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2002 Mercedes SLK320. Automatic, Brilliant Silver, 10500 miles. As new £ 10,995



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2005 Mercedes CLK240 2.6 Coupe, Brilliant Silver, 41500 miles, FSH..... £ 5,995



2006 Mazda MX5 2.0i Sport 6-speed, Silver, Black hide, 72000 miles, FSH..... £4,795



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2002 Mercedes SLK230 Kompressor Auto, Silver, 37000 miles, FSH..... £5,995



2000(X) Mercedes SLK230 Kompressor Auto, Silver, 43000 miles, FSH..... £5,795



2001 BMW Z3 2.2i Roadster, Titan Silver, Black hide, 62000 miles, FSH..... £5,295



2001 Mercedes SLK230, Obsidian Black, Black/Cream hide, 55000 miles..... £5,295



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NEWS

LONDON TRIBUTE TO BRACQ

The Mercedes-Benz Club is among the exhibitors at the upcoming London Classic Car Show, which is held at the Docklands' Excel Centre between Thursday, February 15 and Sunday, February 18. The Club's stand will showcase four member's cars, each designed by Paul Bracq. This is to mark the 60th anniversary of Bracq becoming the head of the Daimler-Benz design studio. In his ten years in the role Bracq styled some of the marque's most distinctive classic models, including the 600, the W113 'Pagoda' SL, the W108 and W114/W115 executive saloon and the W108/W109 luxury saloons. After his time with Daimler Bracq returned to his native France where he assisted with the design of the first generation of TGV high-speed trains.



Mercedes-Benz Club members can benefit from reduced-price entry to the London Classic Car Show. For more details visit: www.thelondonclassiccarshow.co.uk

ADOLF HITLER'S MERCEDES SOLD AT AUCTION

One of the most iconic yet infamous Mercedes-Benz products of all time was offered for sale earlier this month for the first time in 13 years. The car in question is a W150 770K Grosser, also known as the 'Super Mercedes'. Only 88 W150s were built, just eight survive and this one, chassis number 189744, was used as the personal transport of the German dictator Adolf Hitler. Some of the most historic photos and film taken of the Nazi ruler include him travelling or standing in this very car.

Auctioned by Worldwide Auctioneers at its sale in Scottsdale, Arizona on Wednesday, January 17, the W150 was described by the auction house as 'the most historically significant automobile ever offered for public sale.' The catalogue listing for the car was at pains to point out that the car had value beyond its association with one of history's most reviled tyrants. "It did not choose its user or its use. People were responsible for that," the copy read. "If the original provenance of this Mercedes can be set aside, if only momentarily, the Mercedes-Benz 770K remains quite likely the world's greatest achievement in terms of automotive design, engineering and construction."

There is certainly a case to be made. The W150 Grossers were designed to be the ultimate expression of contemporary car design, providing the ultimate in luxury, performance, quality, finish and engineering at one of the highest price tags of the time. The 1939 model featured independent front suspension, a De Dion-type rear axle and a supercharged 7.7-litre straight-eight overhead valve engine which produced 230 horsepower.

The 'Grosser' was seized by American forces in 1945 and then



Above: The W150 770K Grosser used by Adolf Hitler has been auctioned. The car was used by the dictator in his victory parades marking the defeat of France, Yugoslavia and Greece. Today part of the proceeds of the sale went to a human rights and Holocaust memorial charity (photo courtesy of Worldwide Auctioneers)

disposed of. It was briefly owned by a Belgian tobacco tycoon, who sold it to an American competitor as part of a business deal. He in turn donated it to his local Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) branch in 1949 where it was treated as a war trophy, being used in parades and fundraising events. After falling into disrepair in 1976 the car was bought by a pair of collectors who confirmed the car's history and performed a cosmetic restoration with the support of Mercedes-Benz. The 770K has passed through two further owners and has been loaned to a succession of museums and collections around the United States since then. Last time the car changed hands in 2004 it did so for over £13 million. It has been estimated that even without this car's individual provenance it would be worth nearly £4 million.

In recognition of the provenance and historical significance of this car, ten per cent of the sale price was donated to the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, an international Jewish human rights charity which fights anti-Semitism and bigotry worldwide and preserves the memory and lessons of the Holocaust.

ANNIVERSARY ROUND-UP

The coming year holds several important anniversaries for Mercedes enthusiasts.

Two mark a couple of the important safety features that the marque has introduced to production cars which are now commonplace: It is 40 years since the first electronic four-wheel anti-lock braking system was fitted on the W116 S-Class and 30 years since Mercedes became the first manufacturer to offer passenger airbags as an option (on the W126 S-Class, the R129 SL, the W124 and the W201).

Going further back in time, 2018 is the 90th anniversary of the W06 SSK, the Ferdinand Porsche-designed high-performance roadster which was one of the most highly regarded sports and racing cars of its day. Fewer than 40 SSKs were built and the model won some of the most



Above: W124 airbags turn thirty.

prestigious races of its day, including the German Grand Prix, the Mille Miglia and the British TT.

Back in 1968 was when Daimler launched the W114/115 saloons, commonly known as the 'Strich Acht'

or 'Stroke Eight' models due to their '8' serial number suffixes, referring to their launch year. It is therefore these popular and durable cars' 50th anniversary.

More tangentially related to Mercedes but forming a crucial part of Daimler's more recent history, it will be 20 years since the launch of the Smart city car marque this year.

Finally, 2018 will be the 39th and final year of G-Wagen production. Although much-changed since the original 4x4 utility vehicle was launched in 1979, today's G-Wagen is a direct evolution but will be replaced by an all-new G-Class model this year.

Mercedes-Benz will be officially marking all these anniversaries (and others relating to the marque's motorsport history) with events throughout the year, as will many Mercedes enthusiast groups.

IN THE RUNNING FOR BEST OF THE BEST

A vintage Mercedes is in the running for the 2018 Peninsula Classics Best of the Best Award, which will choose an ultimate winner from a selection of winners from some of the world's most demanding and prestigious concours events.

Among the finalists is Bruce McCaw's 1929 Mercedes S-Series with boat-tail tourer bodywork by Barker & Co of London. It was specified by and delivered to Edward Curzon, 6th Lord Howe, a naval officer and peer who was also president of



Above: The 1929 S-type roadster which won last year's Pebble Beach Concours is now in the running for the Peninsula Classics Best of the Best Award, announced next month.

the British Automobile Racing Club and who would win the 1931 24 Hours of Le Mans, albeit at the wheel of an Alfa Romeo.

The S-Series was the winner of 2017's Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, and will now be judged by a panel of 24 experts against seven other contenders. The Mercedes is the oldest of the octet, which include pre- and post-war Ferraris, a Lancia and a Bugatti.

The winner will be announced at the Retromobile classic car show in Paris on Thursday, February 8.

NEWS

Good news for modified classics

Last year saw the announcement of MoT exemption for cars 40 years old and above, which comes into effect from May 20 this year. This brings the MoT test into line with the 40-year rolling tax exemption.

A matter of concern was that the initial wording of the changed regulations prohibited 'substantially changed' cars from being test-exempt. This also raised the prospect of such vehicles also being denied tax exemption and the potential of exclusion from 'Historic' registration status all together in the future. Such systems already exist in other European countries, where cars officially classified as 'Historic', and gaining certain perks such as tax- and test-exemption must conform to often-strict authenticity and condition rules. Many owners of classic cars which had been extensively modified in-period or during restorations and rebuilds many decades ago were worried about their cars' futures.

The Department for Transport issued specific guidelines on the matter of 'Vehicles of Historic Interest' (as the new category is called) just before Christmas, which stated that vehicles that had been 'substantially changed' more than 30 years ago will be tax- and test-exempt.

Unique Camper goes to Auction

When thinking of classic German camper vans the famous Volkswagen Type 2 is the one which immediately comes to mind, but Mercedes-Benz built its own range of light commercial vehicles, and of course continues to do so. While Volkswagen values have risen sharply over recent years it would be an exceptional 'Microbus' indeed which would be able to match the value of a rare and freshly-restored Mercedes equivalent which went under the hammer at RM Sotheby's sale in Arizona on January 18.

The O319 started life in 1959 as a minibus but has been fully restored, lightly modernised and converted into a camper. As well as fully trimmed interior (equipped with a double berth, hot and cold water, a gas stove and cooker, custom-made fitted cupboards and a comprehensive electrical system with a solar panel for battery charging)

A fully-restored and custom-converted camper van, based on a 'twin-wheel' O319 minibus, fetched over £200,000 when sold at auction last month (photo courtesy of RM Sotheby's).



the bus has been fitted with a 2.3-litre fuel-injected M115 engine, adjustable air suspension and modern front seats for long-distance comfort.

RM Sotheby's expected the O319 camper to fetch between £130,000 and £150,000, making it one of the most expensive Mercedes classic commercials to sell in recent years.

SPOTLIGHT A SPECIALIST

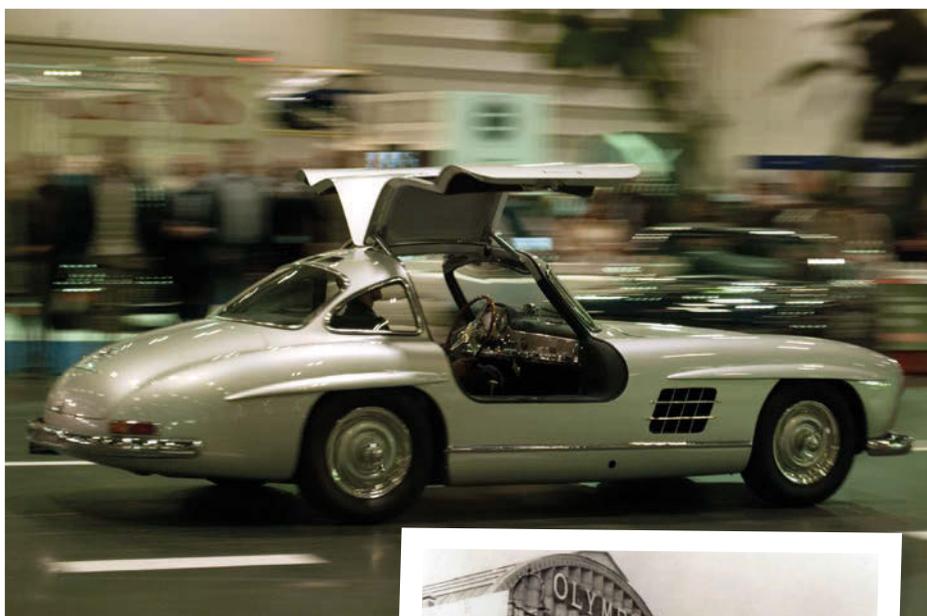
Mercedes-Benz UK is asking owners to nominate independent Mercedes specialists to feature in an official magazine. The TradePartners programme encourages the sale of genuine manufacturer parts to independent specialists and Mercedes is looking for businesses to feature in the programme's in-house magazine of the same name.

If your classic Mercedes is looked after by a specialist who makes use of genuine parts, especially on older models and you would like their work to be acknowledged, please contact the editor of TradePartners, Eric Lafone by calling: 01789 490530 or via: eric@impactpr.co.uk



If you would like to promote an independent Mercedes specialist who uses genuine parts, Mercedes-Benz UK wants to hear from you.

CARS RETURN TO OLYMPIA



The 19th-century Olympia exhibition hall in Kensington, London was the original home of the British Motor Show, which started life as the International Motor Exhibition in 1905. The venue hosted the event until 1936 when it moved to Earls Court. Since then no motor shows have taken place there but, after an 81-year gap, this will change in July.

With the success of the new London Classic Car Show, that event's organisers have added a second to their roster called Grand Auto which will be held at the historic Olympia site. It will showcase over 250 of the world's most desirable cars and "pay homage to the future, present and past of automotive greatness." Confirmed headline features include an indoor parade track called The Runway and The Time



Above: A new car show in London will take place at the famous Olympia venue this July. An indoor runway will allow modern and classic cars to be shown to the full – like this 300SL at the London Classic Car Show organised by the same team.

Capsule, showcasing 'decade-defining cars' chosen by a panel of experts from the world of motoring and design.

It is likely that Mercedes will have an official presence at Grand Auto, as will Mercedes specialists and clubs. However at the time of going to print the organisers of Grand Auto had not published a full list of confirmed exhibitors.

Grand Auto will be at Olympia between Thursday, July 5 and Sunday, July 8. For more information go to: www.grandautoshow.com



LOWER SEVERN CROSSING TOLLS

As part of the transition of both of the bridges which form the Severn Crossing to public ownership this year, the toll charges had VAT removed from January 8. This reduced the charge for car drivers from £6.70 to £5.60. It is planned to remove the tolls completely by the end of the year.



ONE MILLION POP-UP CUSTOMERS

Mercedes-Benz UK's 'pop-up shops', which bring cars, merchandise and staff to shopping centres around the UK, welcomed their one millionth customer since the scheme started. The milestone was reached at the store in the Liverpool ONE centre and the lucky customer received a £250 shopping voucher.



DUCKHAMS IS BACK

Much-loved oil brand

Duckhams relaunched late last year and its familiar yellow tins containing green-tinged lubricant are now back on the shelves. Three classic oils are currently available - Q20w-50, Europe's first multigrade oil which was virtually standard-issue for family cars in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, and monograde SAE 30 and SAE 40. Duckhams plans to expand its classic range and offer modern oils in the future.



Letters

Write to us at Letters, Mercedes Driver, Cudham Tithe Barn, Berry's Hill, Cudham, Kent TN16 3AG, or email md.ed@kelsey.co.uk

There's nothing like a Mercedes.

I bought my first Mercedes in 1982; a 200 saloon. I liked the way it made me feel, and the way it was built after my old Rover 2300 had fallen apart around me. I replaced that with a 230E that I bought new in 1988, and which I have kept since. Having done almost 240000 miles since then, I'm still as impressed by my Mercedes as I ever was. It does everything I need a car to do, and I won't be selling it until it's totally beyond repair. My wife now has a Renault Megane, and while it's more economical and faster than my old 230, I know which makes me feel happiest.

Thank you Mercedes, for thirty five years of happy motoring.

Bill Stevenson, *Bristol*.

Reliving my childhood.

My family holidays all seemed to be spent in Mercedes-Benzes, as my father was a secondhand car dealer and he would make sure he had a suitably roomy estate car from stock for our weeks in Cardigan Bay. Fifteen years later I'm looking to buy my first classic Mercedes to relive those happy memories. Do other car marques make people feel quite the same? I never really paid attention to the BMWs or Audis he brought home, and now I'm in my thirties I can't really think of any other old cars I'd like to have.

David Rimmer, *Thanet*.

SL or Stag?

I remember reading a twin test many years ago between a Triumph Stag and a Mercedes 350SL. I'd been looking for a Stag as a weekend toy, but the article made me think twice. There was a 500SL for sale six miles from my house, so I thought I'd go and see if it was as good as the Stags I remembered from my youth. I'm now on my third R107 – they're



fantastic cars, and it makes me feel special every time I drive it. I sold my previous two looking to try something different, but neither time could I find a car that I enjoyed as much as I had enjoyed the Mercedes. I won't be selling this one.

Ernie Parker, *Whitby*.

Is the MoT fit for purpose?

There are several ways in which the MoT is not fit for purpose in my

view, and thus the impending MoT exemption for older cars may not be as disastrous as people think. Classic car owners tend to be conscientious people who will repair faults as they occur, rather than waiting for them to be spotted by a third party. The MoT is only valid on the day of test too – any faults might occur the following day and not be noted on the paperwork as a result. And it tests items in ways for which they were not designed – for instance, the parking brake was not designed to be operated as a secondary brake, it was designed to hold the car while stationary.

I'm not saying there shouldn't be a health check for classic cars. But the existing MoT is not fit for purpose and we should not assume the MoT ensures that a car is roadworthy. Is now the time to develop a new voluntary test that could run alongside the existing MoT to serve the interests of older car enthusiasts?

Jason Royce, *Manchester*.

From Main:

Is the MoT relevant to older cars like this W124? Were your childhood holidays spent in the back of a Benz?

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The W113 SL has become an icon of the 1960s. Nicknamed Pagoda, even today there are few cars quite so glamorous and cool.





Mercedes SL

Think of 1960s celebrities and eventually the topic will turn to the Mercedes SL. Everybody who was anybody had one – Audrey Hepburn, Sophia Loren, Peter Ustinov and Sir Stirling Moss have all owned and enjoyed the sporting drophead. Even today, it's enjoyed by the rich and famous. Ryan Giggs, Kate Moss, Nico Rosberg, John Travolta and Harry Styles all have a Pagoda on the patio.

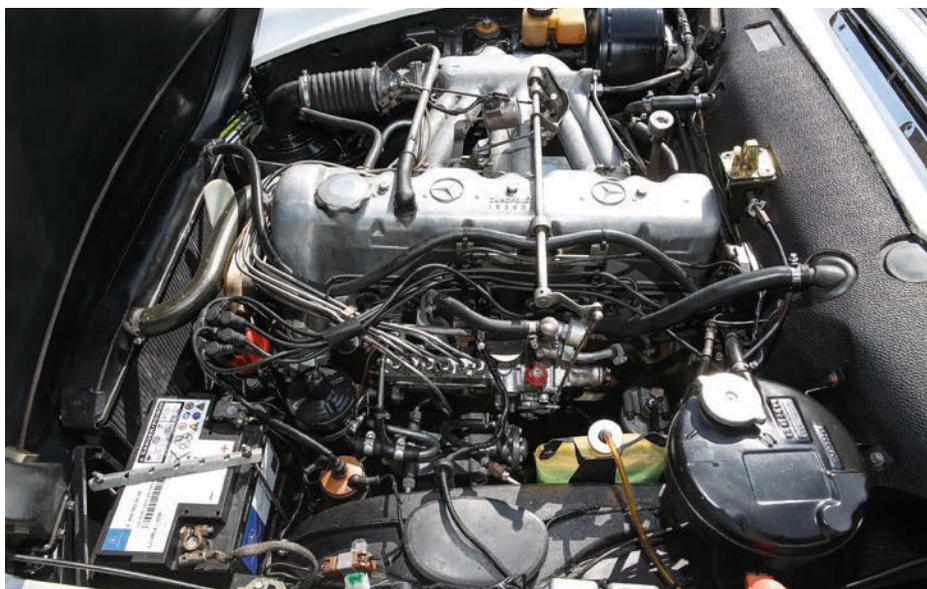
Over the course of the W113's run, Mercedes tweaked the formula, pulling it further from the original lightweight sports concept and further toward becoming a GT car. And while those later cars are quicker, there's little difference in terms of the market today – whether a 230, 250 or 280, all W113 SLs are seriously desirable classic roadsters.

"Kate Moss, John Travolta and Harry Styles all have Pagodas."

By the late 1950s it was evident that the Mercedes SL concept needed a revamp. The 300SL supercar was beyond the reach of most, and the 190SL was underpowered and becoming dated in design. The company experimented with an update of the 190 – known as the 220SL to reflect its larger engine, this car was given the development code of W127. However, production difficulties meant the project was delayed repeatedly; its original planned July 1957 launch passing unnoticed. By



Words: Sam Skelton
Pics: Classics Central



1960 it was concluded that a new model, based on the W111 and using technology from the W112, would be a wiser solution. Three years later, the 230SL was launched – dubbed the W113.

Paul Bracq was responsible for much of the styling, but the famed hardtop roof – the item which led to it becoming dubbed the Pagoda – was the work of Béla Barényi. Barényi was also responsible for some intelligent aspects of the car's design. It was the first sports car to be designed with

Above: M127 soon gave way to larger engines.

safety in mind, featuring front and rear crumplezones and featuring rounded cabin edges in the style of the W111 which spawned it.

At launch, Mercedes' chief engineer performed an impressive stunt to demonstrate the capabilities of the new SL. Grand Prix driver Mike Parks had previously lapped the three-quarter mile Vétraz-Monthoux racing circuit in Annemasse in 47.3 seconds, in his Ferrari 250GT. Engineer Rudolf Uhlenhaut achieved a time of 47.5 seconds in a brand new 230SL,

despite a deficit of almost 100BHP and 6 cylinders. While the SL may not have been a sports car, it was certainly sporting enough.

In 1966 Mercedes updated the concept with the more powerful 250SL, which brought rear disc brakes and increased power to the SL range. The fuel tank was increased from 65 litres to 82 litres, and a limited slip differential became available as an option. The 250 was also made available as a 2+2; the California Coupe. This model replaced the convertible hood with

STATS BOX

Mercedes 230SL

Years: 1963-1967
Engine: 2308cc, 6-cyl, M127
Power: 150bhp@5500rpm
Torque: 145lb.ft@4200rpm
Max speed: 120mph
Length: 4285mm
Width: 1760mm
Height: 1305mm
Production: 19831

Mercedes 250SL

Years: 1966-1967
Engine: 2496cc, 6-cyl, M129
Power: 150bhp@5500rpm
Torque: 159lb.ft@4200rpm
Max speed: 121mph
Length: 4285mm
Width: 1760mm
Height: 1305mm
Production: 5196

Mercedes 280SL

Years: 1967-1971
Engine: 2779cc, 6-cyl, M130
Power: 170bhp@5750rpm
Torque: 180lb.ft@4500rpm
Max speed: 124mph
Length: 4285mm
Width: 1760mm
Height: 1305mm
Production: 23885



Mercedes SL

"The 280SL was the strongest-selling W113."

a vestigial rear seat; and while the car was supplied with a hardtop this was removable for those who wished to take the risk of sudden downpours.

In the following year, 1967, Mercedes launched its final W113 derivative, the 280SL. Power was once again increased, though the whole car was softened to reflect its new status as a GT rather than a sports car. It marked the end of development for Mercedes' SOHC six cylinder engine. This final evolution was the strongest-selling W113, with the majority of production heading to America as automatic transmission models. Mercedes, aware of the direction the market for prestigious convertibles was heading, developed the replacement R107 SL with a focus on touring ability rather than sporting prowess. Its launch in 1971 as the 350SL marked the end of W113 production, and the end of one of the most special eras in the SL model's lifetime.

To understand and appreciate the way a W113 SL drives, you need to adjust the way you think about how a car should perform. It's not fair to judge this on speed, or noise, or handling, or ride. While it acquits itself fairly on most measures, the best way to consider it is in terms of how it makes you feel. And at that, the SL is fantastic. You catch yourself watching your reflection in shop windows, enjoying the turning heads as you glide past.

And you can understand why when you take a step back and look at it. The lines are really rather simple, yet there's plenty to notice. The small hips behind the doors, the



Above: Many were fitted with Becker radios from new.



delicacy of the tail, the stacked lights – none of it is overdone or gaudy, and yet you sense that more attention and care has gone into this shape than most.

All the touches that make 1960s SLs so special – the Art Deco façade, the nice use of wood, and the big horn push – all set it apart from mere sportscars or pseudo GTs. It might be a 1960s car with vinyl trim, but knowing you're driving something so stylish sets it apart from the rest. It's not especially quick, despite the 2.8-litre engine in the car we tested, but the SL was always more cruiser than sports car. The kickdown of the four speed automatic gearbox and sweet sound of this six-cylinder engine encourage spirited driving, although the light power steering doesn't. This is a little different in the manual – the bias feels more athletic because you're making more of the decisions, having more of the input – but in a smooth riding GT, somehow it feels more appropriate to let the car do the work and to enjoy the experience.

While it's more comfortable cruising the seafront at Monte Carlo, the SL handles really rather tidily. It's not communicative in the classic sportscar manner. But what it does is it makes the process of driving quickly feel so easy. Although many feel a GT should be a heavy, hard going, muscular experience, the SL looks the other way. Instead, it's the car into which you could get in London, and emerge in the South of France without worry or exertion. 



THE BIG RIVAL

The Fiat 2300S shared the SL's glamorous styling and driving verve – though high import and export duties in 1960s Italy made it a comparatively rare sight. Often described as a poor man's Ferrari in period, the Fiat was predominantly bodied as a hardtop GT, but Ghia produced 5 convertibles.

STAR ALTERNATIVE

If a W113 appeals but you can't quite afford one, look at the later R107 SL. It comes in a wider variety of models, including the SLC coupe – and prices for nice ones are about a third of the figure a good W113 will cost nowadays.

MARKET ANALYSIS

A good W113 today can command upwards of £100,000, with the late 280s being the most valuable models. 250s are less valuable, and the original 230 less valuable still, with £85,000 buying one of the nicest 230s on the market. Project values don't differ hugely; you'll need £20,000-25,000 to get something complete and viable, while £40,000-70,000 will get you a reasonable example from a private seller if you're prepared to look hard enough. Concours cars should be considered separately to usable examples, with the best concours cars commanding up to £150,000. Manuals – especially the rare five speed ZF – are worth more than automatics, and original cars are worth more than restored examples unless the restoration is especially good.



The 50th anniversary of the W114/W115

The star of **Sindelfingen**

As the W114/W115 turns fifty, we examine the model's development and reception.



Words: Andrew Roberts



The 50th anniversary of the W114/W115 is an appropriate moment to reflect on what precisely constitutes a 'quality' car. Is it the level of standard equipment, the size of the engine or, for the medallion wearing sector of the market, the presence of a vinyl roof and "go-faster" stripes? But then, others would argue that these are of less, or minimal, importance as compared to a design of absolute integrity, a phrase which encapsulates the lasting appeal of this great Mercedes-Benz. It did not matter whether your budget ran to a 200D or a 280; the standards of build and engineering remained world-class regardless of engine size or number of instruments.

And the challenge facing Daimler-Benz when the W114/W115 was revealed to the press in January of 1968 should not be underestimated. Since 1961 the four-cylinder W110 "Fintail" had established itself as West Germany's bourgeoisie transport par excellence and a major

"The W110 Fintail replacement had a proud legacy to live up to."

presence in world markets, so any replacement had a proud legacy to live up to. In terms of local rivals, the Opel Kapitän A and the P7-series Ford Taunus 20M had an image that was more akin to an American-style cruiser than respectable family transport but the BMW "Neue Klasse" 2000 was widely regarded as one of the finest cars in its class. Meanwhile, NSU had recently launched the Ro80 and if that represented a step too far for the average Mercedes-Benz driver, Auto Union were planning the launch of a new FWD prestige car, the Audi 100 towards the end of the year.

But the W114/W115 more than fulfilled Daimler-Benz's expectations, becoming the first of their cars to sell over a million units. »



The 50th anniversary of the W114/W115

Its gestation dates to 1961, the same year that the 190 'Fintail' debuted and under the direction of Dr. Nallinger, the company's technical director, the new model gradually took shape. It was decided that it should have an identity that was separate from the larger Mercedes-Benz offerings, have a spacious cabin but not be excessively large overall and convey a sense of timeless elegance that would set it above lesser competitors.

Production commenced in late 1967 and in December of that year a select group of journalists was invited to test the latest Mercedes-Benz at Targa Florio. In January of the following year the 'New Generation' was presented to the press and two months later, the W114 and W115 proved to be the stars of the Geneva Motor Show. One major talking point was the entirely new chassis, and another was the rear suspension, for gone were the familiar swing axles in favour of a new semi-trailing arm set-up. By the late 1960s, the marque's work with passive automobile safety thanks to the great engineer Béla Barényi was already well-established and inside, the cabin featured a collapsible steering column.

Ahead of the driver were circular dials in place of the Fintail's stylish but fairly unreadable speedometer and the braking was now via dual-circuit discs. Above all, the coachwork was a masterpiece of restraint. The styling was the responsibility of Paul Bracq who had previously devised the bodywork for the 600, the W113 and the W108. Familiarity with the W114 and W115 over the past five decades has often led to his work being somewhat taken for granted, for his coachwork was well-proportioned and indeed owed nothing to any passing vogue. The large glass area also helped to cleverly disguise the fact that the

Right: A varied range of engine and body types meant plenty of choice.

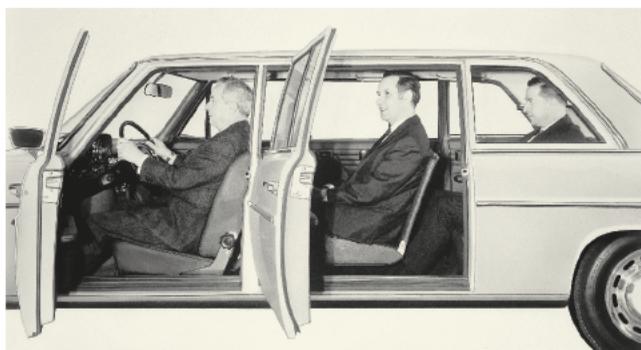
"By 1968, W114s were fast becoming ubiquitous sights on German roads."

W114/115 were not much shorter than their formidable looking predecessor.

The line-up initially consisted of six saloons, commencing with the four-cylinder W115 in 200 and 220, both of which were powered by 2-litre or 2.2-litre OHC engines, plus the diesel 200 D and 220. As for the six-cylinder W114 230 and 250, the former had the 2.3-litre unit from the outgoing W110 while the latter had 2.5 litre power and was principally recognisable by its double front bumper. Asides from the 230, all the engines were new, and the range was initially referred to with an '8' prefix; this denoted the year of its launch.

In October 1968, by which time the Strich Achts ('Stroke 8s') – a name that never in appeared in brochures or on the badging – were fast becoming ubiquitous sights on German roads, the exceptionally handsome 250C and 250CE coupes made their debut. The roofline was lowered by two inches and, all in all, here was a car that was fit for any international man of mystery who liked to wear his sunglasses indoors. The CE was also notable as the marque's first employment of Bosch D-Jetronic fuel injection on a production model and the W114/W115s' appeal was further expanded by a long-wheelbase option for the 220D and 230 that proved ideal for the airport and hotel courtesy car markets. »







The 50th anniversary of the W114/W115

Outside of Germany, the four-door competed with the Volvo 144 and, by the end of 1968, with Peugeot's new 504, which was Car of The Year 1969. In the UK, heavy import duties rather altered the W115's image in particular, for while a petrol engine 200 or 220 was often the Mercedes-Benz of choice for a Frankfurt bank manager or accountant, for a British motorist such a 'foreign car' that was a symbol of prestige for a barrister or factory owner. When Motor magazine tested a 220 in early 1969 the asking price of £2,439 15s 3d made it more expensive than a Jaguar XJ6 but they thought that 'the quality of finish and engineering is very high'.

Meanwhile Autocar evaluated a 250 Automatic in December 1968 and even though £2,754 8s was then a vast sum of money (the W114 cost more than a quartet of new Mini 850s with power steering adding a further £91 to your bill) the article concluded that it 'continues the high standards of construction, for safety and durability which have become traditional from Mercedes-Benz'. A few months later Car magazine also tested a 250 and found that the handling was 'superb. Corners become bends, bends curves, and curves you scarcely notice'. As for the diesel W115, you would have to be a very affluent taxi firm to be able to afford a 1969-vintage 220D at £2,538 - 'Economy - at a price' mused the chaps at Motor.

Daimler-Benz also offered the W114/W115 in both standard and long wheelbase forms as a partially bodied chassis and these often provided the basis for ambulances. As there was never a factory-built estate it was made in station wagon form by various coachbuilders including Crayford in the UK. According to the owners' club's fascinating webpage - <https://www.crayfordconvertibleclub.com/> - the conversion of a long wheelbase



Above: The W114 served well as a taxi around the world.

"A single 240D amassed some 2,858,307 miles."

W114 that could accommodate nine people and their luggage was 'named "The Dachshund" but Mercedes Benz took exception to one of its cars being named a dog'. One example of this truly amazing vehicle was sold at a then high price of £6,991 and it still exists today.

In April of 1972, there was a new W114 flagship in the form of the 280, which boasted a DOHC 2.8 litre six-cylinder engine and in late 1973 the range received a facelift with a slimmer front grille. And in July 1974 Daimler-Benz unveiled the 240D, the world's first mass-produced car with a five-cylinder diesel engine. After extensive tests, it was decreed that a four-cylinder 2.4-litre plant generally lacked for performance and a six-cylinder unit would have made the car too expensive and so the solution was the 2.4 litre OM

616. Cab drivers of the world were amazed, for here was a diesel saloon so up to the minute that it even boasted key starting rather than the old method of pulling a lever.

The 240D was the last major development of the W114/115 as the replacement W123 made its debut in January 1976 but high demand meant that the older car continued in production until December. Perhaps the best story concerning this key product from Sindelfingen is that of the taxi driven by Gregorios Sachinidis of Greece. In 1981 he acquired a late-model five-year-old 240D with a 'mere' 220,000 miles on the clock but when he donated the mighty car to the Mercedes-Benz Museum some 23 years and four engines later (he apparently rotated the power plants during his ownership) it had amassed some 2,858,307 miles. But then a car of true quality can never be measured by its standard equipment levels or bhp but by the fashion in which it serves its owner and enhances a marque's name. And that is why every version of the W114 and W115 are so important. 

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Mercedes W124

Words: Justin Lazić
Pics: Peter Seabrook



High Mile Hero

Adam Adams's 300D has done 300K – but you'd not believe it to look at it.

Mercedes-Benz's W124 series spanned a lengthy production run from 1985 to 1997 and is still to this day the most prolific passenger model from Stuttgart, with a phenomenal 2.7 million examples produced.

Production across individual engine variants was fairly evenly spread, reflecting the W124's appeal to a wide range of clientele. For those seeking six cylinder smoothness with the durability and economy of a diesel, the 300D saloon was the model of choice.

"W124s are famed for their ability to provide years of outstanding service."

Left: Adam's car wears its miles well

Given the longevity of the W124 range, the majority of the 2.7-million examples produced wear their scars well and are famed for their ability to provide years of outstanding service even to the present day. First launched in 1985 and running in European markets until 1997, the W124 was the E Class version of Mercedes' modular line which began in 1982 with the W201 190E series. Bruno Sacco's influence meant the models were big on aerodynamics and the W124 in 200 base form famously quoted a drag coefficient of 0.29 which was class-leading for its time. »



Mercedes W124

A big departure from the chrome bumper W123 it replaced, the W124 was the "pivot" unit of the Mercedes passenger car range, with the largest range of engines ever offered on a Benz product to this day.

Expensive cars in their own right, a 300D saloon such as the type owned by Adams would have cost as much as £60,000 if ordered in overseas markets such as Australia, where pecuniary import duties made these vehicles almost exotic.

However a degree of cynicism has crept into the classic car market for cars of this type in recent years. Older than 20 years but not quite 30 in most cases, they have slipped into the "grey zone" of vehicles which are not quite recognised classics in some people's eyes, but are no longer seen as reliable daily drivers in others'. Inevitably this has led to claims that the W124 is not worth restoring given resale prices are affected by this trend, and some claim the cars' original glamour can never be recaptured once the miles have taken their toll.

This car will make them think again. Adam Adams' W124 300D has been described as among the best available. Guess the mileage? Well, that question was put to our photographer. His guess: 20,000. But a quick check of its MoT history reveals this car has passed its last 11 consecutive MoTs without any advisories. That same online check also reveals this car's biggest secret: 309,000 miles. Used every day without fear or favour, this is an ideal demonstration of what Mercedes were capable of building in their heyday and the message is clear: find a good example now, improve and stick with it: this could be your car in a few years' time.

Adams is surprisingly upbeat about the restoration costs also. "I basically sent the car to my engineer to arrange paint and panel and do whatever needed doing. It was sort

Right: Nothing has been overlooked – even the wheels have been refurbished

"It was sort-of carte blanche."

of carte-blanc in that I didn't want to have to approve every bolt, washer and nut so I told him to get on with it basically. The end result was a decent bill but certainly not the down payment on a new Lexus, let's put it that way."

Amortised over the course of anticipated future use this car could turn out to be the best value on the road today. And with 4x electric windows, electric sunroof, leather upholstery and cruise control, it's hardly spartan in terms of equipment. Refinished alloy road wheels and brand new tyres encourage the viewer to double check the mileage.

Could this be the first ever car to be clocked forward?

Adams laughs, "I hadn't considered that! No, that wasn't a part of the restoration. Actually, it is sort of a badge of honour but not one that is more important to me than the car itself."

This attitude to mileage is refreshing in an environment increasingly dominated by an obsession with sub-100,000 mile examples, irrespective of condition or price. We now live in a post-5 digit odometer world, where scrutiny of distance travelled is at a fever pitch, driven by finance deals and mileage surcharges. This obsession also affects classics, even those which have been restored.

"Mileage has never been the motivating factor behind any of my purchases" says Adams, who is a









Mercedes W124

serial collector of automobiles from the 1950s through to the 1990s. "I look for soul, condition and above all, whether I like the concept and what the vehicle does. I consider myself a saloon car man - those are the proper automobiles".

In order to keep his pride and joy in tip-top condition, and inspired by stories of Greek taxi drivers and their million-mile diesels, Adam has invested in this car with both courage and conviction. Items he has attended to over the years include new head gasket, valve stem seals and piston rings, meaning the engine runs quietly and smoothly and is in fact hard to determine as a diesel with the bonnet closed.

The cooling system has been rebuilt to ensure total reliability and the diesel injection system has also been refreshed, which is an extremely costly procedure but one which results in economy figures nudging 40mpg. For a 3.0 litre powerplant and automatic transmission, that's impressive indeed. That figure causes one to question why dual clutch transmission are so necessary for fuel conservation given today's average mid-size passenger saloons barely achieve the same figure in real world use.

Refurbished alloy road wheels really do lift the side profile of the automobile and remind readers of the near limitless selection of options purchasers could select when ordering a W124, which could also be had with aerodynamic plastic wheel trims which were progressively facelifted through the series.

Shrewdly, Adams performed these restoration tasks before component prices begin to hit the roof in the same way they have done for the preceding W123 range. "I was able to source some parts second hand which kept costs down, but Mercedes' policy of hiking prices for parts serving models no longer in production would probably have put this car's future

Left: Adam collects automobilia as well as cars.

"The W124 does everything you could ask and then more."

in danger had I not acted early with preventative maintenance.

"The car is also a pleasure to work on", he adds, noting that access within the engine bay is good and that as a model, the W124 is very resistant to corrosion with probably the best factory underseal in the business for its day.

"My only disappointment was Mercedes' first attempts at water-based paints, these are not as good as their baked acrylic predecessors - but the car's interior has that classic hewn-from-the-earth feel, and is probably my favourite part."

Also in Adams' collection are an E28 5-series and an absolutely sensational Series I XJ6 4.2, so in this company the W124 earning daily-driver status is a compliment in itself.

"I love the look and feel of the XJ6 but as an everyday prospect the W124 does everything you could ask and then more" says Adams, who proudly shows off the recent repaint. Getting properly into detail, the owner refers to the in-depth requirements of Mercedes' secondary paint codes, required for these two-tone examples. The equivalent secondary tone for the primary Pearl Blue of this example is 5301 Andor Blue - a challenge for the paint shops.

"You can only obtain the colour code from Mercedes' factory system so that was a challenge, but once obtained it was straightforward" says Adams, who is a seasoned car restorer. His engineering shop is testament to his commitment to classic automobiles and their use on the road, rather than as museum pieces. »



"Unlike other forms of collecting - and I am a serial collector - cars are my favourite because you can take them places and engage with people because of them. They are portable." The collection of tin signs and most notably a mid-1980s Jaguar diagnostic terminal are notable indicators of Adams' ability to spot quality but also value.

"I saved this fully functional Jaguar diagnostic terminal from the skip a

couple of years ago" he says before demonstrating its still-working gauges. "Imagine what else is out there that people miss every day?"

This W124 is a timely reminder than there are high mileage, well serviced quality automobiles out there that with the sort of attention Adams has shown, can become just as glamorous, functional and pleasing as this one.

"I fitted the MB-Tex interior as an

Above: Factory towbar proves this W124 earns its keep.

upgrade but aside from that and the paintwork the car is entirely original and numbers-matching. Everything works, including the cruise control, and it's very strong to drive, I think it would surprise a lot of people."

It certainly surprised the photographer.

We would love to hear about your high-mileage stunner (or survivor) - email sam.skelton@kelseymedia.co.uk to tell us all about it.

Here are some W124s you can buy:

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Mercedes S-Class v Rolls-Royce Silver Spirit



Words: Paul Wager
Pics: Paul Wager, Matt Woods

Now that's what I call '80s

The Shadow and the first-generation S-Class were evenly matched... but as the '80s dawned, could Rolls-Royce keep up with the high-tech Mercedes approach?

The Mercedes W116 challenged Rolls Royce's Silver Shadow for the spot at the very top of the car market. Although the pair arrived at much the same place from two very different starting points, they were remarkably well matched in terms of performance and refinement and that's less of a surprise than you might think, since the Rolls-Royce was at the time a relatively modern design.

Fast forward a decade though and the Shadow's replacement, the Silver Spirit was up against a revised S-Class which left no stone unturned in the quest for high-tech perfection of the 'best car in the world' ideal. Since the Spirit relied on plenty of Shadow underpinnings, could Rolls-Royce carry off the neat trick of fighting off the state-of-the-art Mercedes with essentially '60s technology?

MERCEDES W126 S-CLASS

The W116 launched in 1972 may have been the first of the cars officially to bear the Sonderklasse – S-Class – tag but it drew on a long line of world-class big saloons from Stuttgart. As such it represented the state of the art in car engineering and was nigh-on impossible to improve. So Mercedes didn't even try, instead letting the car run relatively unchanged until 1979, when its all-new successor, the W126, was unveiled. Amazingly, the two cars were produced in tandem for the first

Main: W126 heralded a new era for Mercedes styling.

"Critics were disappointed to lose the traditional chrome bumpers and vertical lights"

year such was the demand for the older model but the new car did move the game on a long way. Unlike the gimmicky technology highlighted in many of today's unveilings, the S-Class ushered in some significant engineering advances which have since become commonplace. The forked longitudinal members making up the front end of the bodysell allowed impressive offset frontal crash protection, while the smoother front end combined with a more sharply falling roofline and higher rear allowed impressive drag reduction from Bruno Sacco's neat bodywork. Critics may have been disappointed to lose the traditional chrome bumpers and vertical lights, but in conjunction with other details like a more steeply raked screen, tapered rear body sides, recessed wipers and gutters this brought the Cd down to 0.37. Coupled with catalytic converters





Mercedes S-Class v Rolls-Royce Silver Spirit

available from as early as 1985 and new lightweight alloy engines this showed an early regard for environmental concerns – which of course would later become crucial in the market. The W126 also debuted airbags and seatbelt pretensioners which have since become standard fit on pretty much all new cars.

At launch, the W126 range included the 2.8-litre, 156 bhp straight six 280SE, plus the 3.5-litre V8 350SE, the 4.5-litre V8 450SE and the 5-litre V8 500SE.

The range initially included the standard car plus the 'SEL' long-wheelbase version but in 1981 a first for the S-Class was unveiled in the shape of the SEC, an S-Class coupe. Powered by only the V8 engines, this massive two-door was a superb grand tourer and made even the XJ-S look small.

In 1985, the S-Class received a mid-life makeover with revised bumpers and side mouldings, while the wheels went from 14 to 15 inches. The engine range was also revised at the same time, with two new straight-six units developed for the E-Class being added to the range: the 2.8-litre M110 engine was replaced by 2.6 and 3-litre injected units badged as 260 SE and 300 SE, while the 3.8-litre V8 was bored out to 4.2 litres and wore a 420 SE badge. The 5-litre V8 also gained Bosch KE-Jetronic making it good for 245 bhp.

Meanwhile, stroking the 5-litre V8 to 5.6 litres created a 272 bhp powerplant, also offered in 300 bhp trim without catalyst which made the 560 SEL and 560 SEC the most powerful production Mercedes ever built.

Despite Jaguar offering a V12 motor since 1971, Mercedes had stuck with the V8 which traditionally gave it an advantage over the straight-six powerplants from rival BMW. In 1987 though BMW's 7-Series arrived in 750i form with its new V12 engine, at which point Mercedes swiftly increased the compression of its V8s which alongside other measures allowed a power

Right: Later cars like ours came with larger 15" wheels.

increase of 6-10% across the range. In 1988, the 5.6-litre engine was also made available in the short-wheelbase saloon.

In 1991, the W126 was replaced by another all-new model, the W140, which would see Mercedes offer its own V12 motor. The W126 continued in production for export until 1992. All told, 818,036 examples of the car were produced which makes it significantly more common than the Silver Spirit.

Unsurprisingly, given the solidity of their build, the W126 remains a pretty common sight although it seems that the coupes are slightly more numerous. Under the skin though, the two are all but identical and if you've never experienced these big Mercedes before are a trip into another world. The doors are enormous but swing open and thump closed with a mechanical perfection.

The dashboard is a world away from the rather stark fascia of its predecessor and features all the controls for the luxury and convenience kit which by the late '80s had become a requirement. More than with any other car of the period, there's a sense that absolutely every single element has been considered down to the last detail, from the intuitive electric seat controls which mimic the shape of the seats themselves to the action of the glovebox door and the ashtray lid.

As ever with Mercedes, there's a single column stalk operating everything from lights and wipers to indicators but it works well once you're used to it and cocooned in the massive seats you quickly feel confident at the helm of the mighty Benz.

The straight-six engine is all very well but if you want an S-Class you really want the grunt to go with it and that means a V8 – your only choice in the coupes in any case. The SE in our photos is powered by the 5-litre V8 and at idle it's as quiet as the Rolls-Royce unit, as you'd expect being several decades newer in its design. Mercedes of this era always seem to have







Mercedes S-Class v Rolls-Royce Silver Spirit





This was the dawn of the '80s when faster, newer, and high-tech were all-appealing

a long-travel throttle although the trade-off is that they're easy to drive smoothly in city traffic. Give it a sharp enough prod though and the S-Class moves away with an energy you won't get from the much heavier Silver Spirit, with the car being a surprisingly capable handler too. Mercedes press material and magazine road tests of the era show '80s heroes opposite-locking the big limos with abandon and although it's unlikely many buyers ever drove them on the limit, the cars do feel more nimble at speed than their general bulk would suggest and certainly happier to be hustled across country than the Silver Spirit. The chassis of the W126 was essentially similar in layout to its predecessor, using semi-trailing arms at the rear and double wishbones at the front.

At speed the S-Class is beautifully stable and as you'd expect offers a soothing ride which although firmer than the float of the Rolls-Royce does have less thump over broken surfaces.

ROLLS-ROYCE SILVER SPIRIT

When Mercedes unveiled the new S-Class, it's fair to assume that there was some degree of panic at Crewe, where the Silver Shadow was already 14 years old and suddenly looking dated against the smoothed-out new Mercedes. Yes, they could be confident that a great proportion of their typical customer base might prefer the chrome detailing and traditional proportions of the Shadow but equally this was the dawn of the '80s when faster, newer

Left: Rolls-Royce claimed this was the best car in the world - was it?

and high-tech were all appealing.

They may have been making cars for the top end of society but Rolls-Royce itself wasn't in great financial health by the end of the '70s and in the best British motor industry tradition needed to employ some lateral thinking in order to keep itself in the game.

The solution was essentially to treat the Silver Shadow to a heavy facelift to give it a more modern style without incurring the costs of a ground-up new model programme. If that sounds like something of a desperate measure, it certainly worked to good effect since the basics of the design lived on until 1998 under the last of the Turbo R and 2003 as the Continental T.

Central to the Silver Spirit was a smoother, squarer body style penned in-house by Fritz Feller, which was perhaps more anonymous than the Shadow but with its square-shouldered bulk had no less a presence. Inside, the leather, wood and sheepskin ambience was preserved and the details subtly updated with the odd digital readout here and there.

Like the Mercedes, the Spirit has a real heft to the doors, but again like the Mercedes they open and close with a neat precision. Entering the Spirit though is very different from a conventional car - the high floor means you step inside rather than sitting down into it, putting you on the level of a modern SUV with a correspondingly commanding driving position.

Driving the Spirit after the Mercedes is like stepping into a different world: the heating, mirrors and seats are operated by heavily plated chunky metal knobs instead of the precise plastic buttons of the German car, while the headlights which are controlled from the column stalk in the Mercedes are operated by a rotary switch in the Rolls-Royce with lettering in place of international symbols.

One of the comments drivers make about the S-Class is the size of the steering wheel but in the Rolls-Royce it's bigger again, with the delicate thin





Mercedes S-Class v Rolls-Royce Silver Spirit

rim from another age. It's all down to the way you drive the car though and in reality the Spirit needs only a delicate grasp of the rim to maintain serene progress. Likewise the column shifter which needs only a fingertip flick to get things underway.

Like the S-Class there's a long travel to the Spirit's throttle pedal which makes it easy to drive the car with the decorum it suggests. Squeeze it gently and the car just oozes away from the kerb, the pushrod V8 barely noticeable. Give it a hefty bootful though and the Spirit does move away smartly. Not as smartly as the 500 though, since that famously 'adequate' power output translates to around 230 bhp and in a car weighing in at 2245 kg it's no match for the Mercedes' 275 bhp and 299 lb.ft in a car which weighs in at 1690 kg.

Sheer straight-line speed isn't what it's about here though and reality both the Mercedes and the Rolls-Royce are brisk enough for any purpose and neither is the kind of car you buy simply for its performance.

The Rolls-Royce isn't quite as happy to be hurled about as the Mercedes either, hard cornering seeing it squat and wallow despite the self-levelling rear suspension and although the Turbo R would later show how just well the car could be tied down, the cooking Silver Spirit is biased towards comfort. On British roads it's more refined than the more firmly sprung Mercedes and progress is really very civilised.

It's on the inside that the Rolls-Royce scores more points over the Mercedes and again, it's just a different way of doing things than being simply better or worse. The fixtures and fittings in the Mercedes are all engineered to perform a function as well as they possibly can, while the Rolls-Royce's interior has been designed to appeal on a more subjective level. The trimming and the veneer are all of course performed

Caption: Silver Spirit a heavy facelift of the previous Shadow.

by hand in the Spirit which creates an entirely different experience from the Mercedes, no matter how high quality the plastic mouldings or how expensive they were to engineer.

The Spirit in our photos is a 1989 example and so benefits from all the improvements made to the model over its lifetime, such as fuel injection and ABS which kept the car up to speed with the competition. It's also a supreme example of how the sumptuous trimming of the Rolls-Royce kept the car on a different level from the mass-produced Mercedes: the Royal Blue exterior and magnolia hide are a classic combination. The picnic tables and built-in glassware in the rear sum it up: here was a car to travel in without being inconvenienced by the actual business of travelling.

And that in a nutshell is the appeal of the Silver Spirit. It may be a design rooted in the '60s but that just doesn't matter, something which was very handy indeed for Rolls-Royce which was able to rely on the Shadow/Spirit platform until the BMW-powered Seraph arrived in 1998.

VERDICT

I was initially drawn to the Rolls-Royce through a combination of familiarity and a love for the British motor industry's knack of creating successful products out of unlikely circumstances: the same thinking which saw Jaguar's XJ40 transformed into the world-beating XJ8 and which saw the MGF created out of Metro bits or the Aston DB7 built on a '70s XJ-S floorpan. I'd always considered the Mercedes a touch anonymous but when you get close to one in the course of driving and photographing it, the sheer quality of the W126 shines through and it's clear that the highly focused engineers in Stuttgart were just as obsessed with their results as the blokes in Crewe lovingly polishing the walnut and hand-soldering the radiator shell. Ultimately then my vote goes to the Mercedes.





THE FACTS	1989 Mercedes-Benz 500SE	1989 Rolls-Royce Silver Spirit
Engine	4973cc	6750cc
Power	248 bhp	230 bhp
Max speed	143 mph	126 mph
0-62 mph	7.5 secs	10.0 secs
Economy	30 mpg	18 mpg



Mercedes SEC v Rolls-Royce Camargue



The Coupe Class

Can Mercedes still beat Rolls-Royce if we take away two doors?

The S-Class is as common in coupe form as the saloon, but it's easy to forget that Rolls-Royce also offered a coupe in the guise of the Camargue. The only Rolls-Royce to be styled by Pininfarina, the Camargue was produced from 1975 until 1986 and so overlaps the Silver Shadow and Spirit.

Like the Mercedes, the Camargue is essentially a two-door coupe version of the saloon and as such is gloriously excessive. It was priced

Above: Nothing prepares you for the sheer bulk of the Camargue

Costlier and rarer - can the Mercedes still challenge Rolls-Royce?

accordingly, too: at launch it was almost twice the price of the Silver Shadow and in 1985 was a colossal £83,122 when the Spirit was £58,037. At Mercedes meanwhile, the difference between S-Class saloon and coupe was around £3000.

Part of the reason behind this was the complex manufacturing process which saw the bodyshells made by Pressed Steel in Cowley and then assembled by Mulliner Park Ward in London before being sent to Crewe for paintwork. Later Camargues

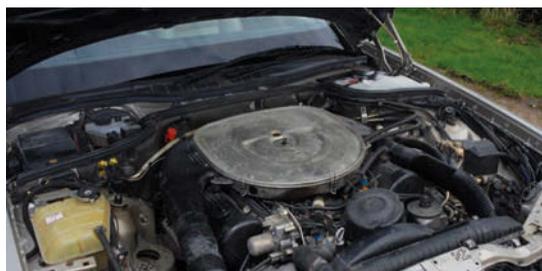


were assembled by Motor Panels in Coventry before being sent to Crewe for final assembly.

In the metal, the Camargue is a real slice of '70s style, with its odd rear proportions and forward-leaning prow – the grille is inclined by some 10 degrees.

If you've never come in close quarters to a Camargue, nothing prepares you for the sheer bulk of the thing: for a two-door it really is vast and makes even the SEC seem sensibly sized. Inside it has something of a split personality with the familiar veneer dash punctuated with octagonal dials in the style of a Learjet. You almost expect to see an artificial horizon and a control yoke in place of the steering wheel.

Driving the Camargue is much like driving a Silver Spirit and in fact it's



Above: Svelte Mercedes a more sporting option.

slightly heavier at 2.6 tonnes than the four-door car.

It's no sports coupe though, and on that score it's the SEC which wins hands-down. In 5-litre trim the SEC is a serious performance weapon and in the smaller, more nimble Mercedes the performance can be enjoyed to the full in a way you just wouldn't drive a Camargue. Both of course will seat four adults in almost as much comfort as the saloon.

VERDICT

There's just something outrageous about a two-door car this big, and the SEC is an Eighties icon. But if you really want outrageous then there's no contest: the Camargue it is.

Thanks

As the name suggests, the SL Shop near Stratford Upon Avon specialises in the SL, specifically the much-loved R107 generation but such is their enthusiasm for anything with the three-pointed star on the prow that they've made a name for themselves as specialists in pretty much all classic Mercedes.

The 500SEC in our photos belongs to one of the firm's regular customers and is a low-mileage one-owner example which would be an ideal example to buy... if it was for sale. Clearly, he's hanging on to the car and we don't blame him but the SL Shop regularly has W126 S-Class in stock in both saloon and coupe flavour, so keep an eye on www.theslshop.com for details.



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Calum Brown Contributor

Benz On Film:
1976 450SEL 6.9

RONIN

It's not just Ronin that employed the 450SEL 6.9, there's another cult movie that utilised Stuttgart's finest – and it may surprise you...

Curning out 269hp from a contemporary four-door saloon may currently seem like the norm, but back in 1975 that sort of power, alongside having a female prime minister, appeared nigh-on impossible. Based on the W116 long wheel-based chassis first introduced in 1972, during the 450SEL production run Mercedes claimed the title for largest engine in a non-American vehicle, boring the M100 V8 out to 6834cc; resulting in an achievable 140mph and 0-60 sprint in 7.1 seconds. The Jaguar engineers at Browns Lane could be seen quivering in their loafers, while Cadillac bigwigs could be heard weeping from their padded cells.

Brimmed with luxury and shovelling enough grunt to stage a coup d'état, the 450SEL 6.9 was far from cheap. By the time production ended in 1981 an interested party would have required at least \$52,995 to bag a showroom fresh example – more expensive than a Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow.

Not all the credit was Mercedes engineering, however. The hydropneumatic self-levelling suspension was first employed by Citroën 19 years prior to the model's launch – not that this



Jean Reno's 1976 6.9 450SEL. Elegant and largely indestructible, it's little wonder the world's coolest man opted for Stuttgart's finest when it boiled down to a life or death situation. The only sin from the Merc's time in Ronin remains the Kim-Kardashian-level-of-fakery CGI tyre smoke illusion, when the impressive reverse 270 degree turn would have been jaw-dropping enough.

deterred the customer. Frank Sinatra, Telly Savalas and the Shah of Iran each owned one, as did JFK Jr. However, the big Merc's shining moment didn't roll around until 17 years after production ended, tearing down French roads with Robert DeNiro caressing a rocket launcher out the sun roof in 1998 petrolhead orgy 'Ronin'.

Anyone who has witnessed John Frankenheimer's magnum opus will recall the Audi S8 and BMW M5, or even the rather misplaced Peugeot 406, but the real star of the show remains

Above: Rocket launchers were not standard fitment.

Even more fantastic, after more than 30 years since Claude Lelouch's controversial *C'était un rendez-vous* was unleashed upon audiences, the director admitted that, while the soundtrack may have been a Ferrari 275GTB, the car on whose bumper he strapped the camera to race through Parisian streets was in fact a 450SEL 6.9. Some claim to have evidence that the very Mercedes used in Ronin was Claude's camera car, yet pulling off a Ferrari impersonation for 30-years is surely badge of honour enough.





ROAD RACER

When McLaren and Mercedes-Benz won their first Formula 1 Constructors' Championship together, they decided to celebrate by launching a road car that showed off the racetrack technology





McLaren-Mercedes SLR

The name 'SLR' is one steeped in Mercedes-Benz history. The moniker was that of the famous Silver Arrow racing cars of the Fifties piloted in iconic races such as the Mille Miglia and Le Mans by some of the biggest names in motorsport. Names such as Juan Manuel Fangio and Sir Stirling Moss.

Heritage doesn't come much better than that, so when Mercedes and McLaren decided to celebrate the Formula 1 achievements with a road car, there was only one name for it. Standing for 'Sport, Leicht, Rennsport', or 'Sport, Lightweight, Racing', the name is one that does what it says on the tin – to a degree at least.

Hot on the heels of winning both the F1 driver's (thanks to Mika Hakkinen) and constructors' championships in 1998, Mercedes teased the world with its vision of a 21st century SLR at the North American Auto Show in Detroit, revealed in the first week of January 1999.

The concept car had a distinctive F1-inspired V-shaped nosecone, twin aerofoils, scissor-opening doors, side exit exhausts (a nod to the 1955 SLR) and a huge bonnet, which was more than long enough to accommodate the 5.5-litre AMG V8 engine, leading some pundits to suggest that a V12 could also be on the cards, should the car ever reach production.

The chassis was made from composite carbon fibre and extruded aluminium to keep weight down, along with a number of concept features such as its Sensotronic Brake Control (SBC) – an electrohydraulic brake system that would debut later in the roadgoing 2001 SL – and bi-xenon headlamps with Active Light System that used intelligent beam patterns to maximise visibility without blinding oncoming motorists.

Later the same year, Mercedes showed a Vision SLR Roadster Concept at the Frankfurt Motor Show. Both would ultimately become production cars.

However, the wait was a long one.



Words: Craig Cheetham
Pics: Mercedes-Benz



"The production car's body was made out of a composite carbon fibre."

Although the finished car looked little different to the concept, production didn't begin until 2003. All the cars were finished at the McLaren Technology Centre in Woking, Surrey, with the powertrains imported from Germany.

As per the concept, the production car had a 5.5-litre AMG V8, equipped with a supercharger (or Kompressor, in Mercedes speak). It developed a whopping 626PS and 780Nm of torque, fed to the rear wheels by a fairly straightforward five-speed automatic transmission with touch-speed control. It could accelerate from 0-62mph in a claimed 3.8 seconds (though several contemporary road testers were able to beat this), with a top speed of 207mph.

All that performance was kept in check thanks to unique carbon-ceramic brakes, along with an adaptable spoiler, which would alter its profile to an angle of 65 degrees under heavy braking to act as an air brake.

The production car's body was made out of a composite carbon fibre developed from the same materials as McLaren-Mercedes' F1 cars, giving it a total kerb weight of just 1,750kg – about the same as a mid-spec Vauxhall Vectra of the era, despite the car's enormous dimensions.

Between 2003 and 2006, over 1,100 SLRs were sold globally, with a UK list price of £260,000.

Late in 2006, the SLR was replaced by the SLR 722, which had a power increase to 650PS, not 722PS as some people believe. Indeed, the 722 was a tribute to the model's heritage, with 722 being Stirling Moss' race number in the 1955 Mille Miglia, when the



McLaren-Mercedes SLR

"In 2008, a one-make race series was commissioned for the car."

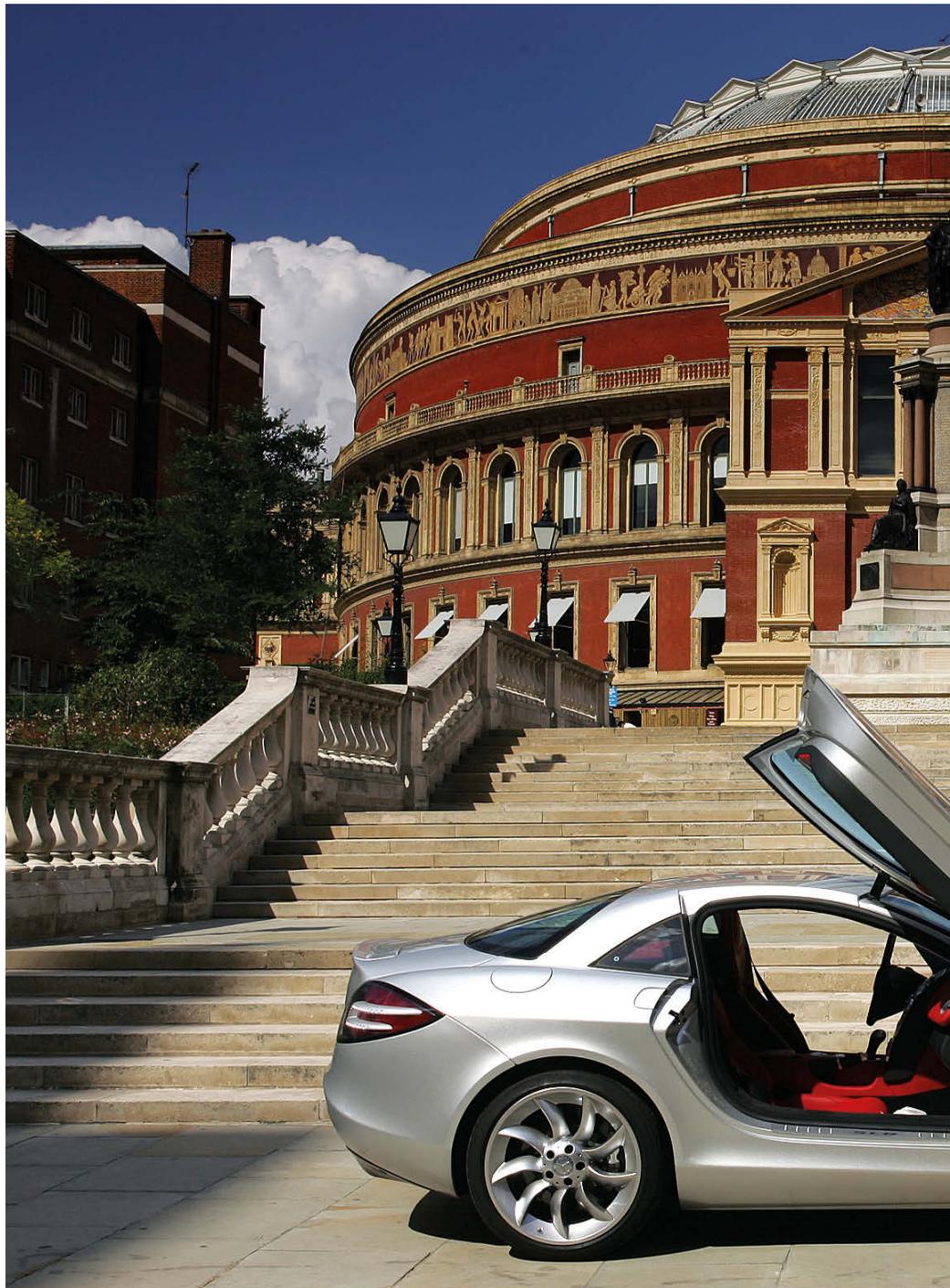
driver was just 25 years old. It was marginally quicker than the original, reaching 62mph in 3.6 seconds and with a top speed of 209mph. It also gained bigger brakes, using the same carbon-ceramic technology as the original model.

The following year, a whole eight years since it was previewed at the Frankfurt Motor Show, Mercedes revealed a Roadster version of the SLR, which used a lightweight carbon fibre hood frame and chopped-off scissor-style doors.

But the SLR story didn't end there. In 2008, a one-make race series was commissioned for the car, using engineering company RML Group to build a race-specific model. RML had achieved great successes with MG-Lola at Le Mans, and was also the engine room behind Nissan and Vauxhall's success in the British Touring Car Championship, as well as taking Chevrolet to victory in World Touring Cars.

The series was targeted at wealthy club racers, with RML redeveloping the suspension, braking system, aerodynamics and interior of the car to make it as lightweight as possible. RML's engineers shed almost 400kg of weight, resulting in a kerb weight of just over 1,300kg. The GT had 680PS and 830Nm of torque, which enabled the SLR 722 GT to accelerate from standstill to 62mph in 3.3 seconds. A total of 21 cars were built, of which three were destroyed during race meetings.

By 2009, the writing was on the wall for the SLR. The supercar landscape was changing. Features such as launch





control, computer controlled adaptable suspension and drive-by-wire technology had made the SLR old hat. But McLaren and Mercedes had one last tribute to pay.

The SLR's swansong came in the form of the 722 Stirling Moss edition. Designed by Korean stylist Yoon Il-hun, the Stirling Moss was a full open-top, with rollover hoops and no roof or windscreen. It was as pure as a supercar could be, with limited weight and features. With 650PS on tap, it hit 62mph in 3.2 seconds, and had a top speed limited to an eye-watering 220mph. A total of just 75 Stirling Moss editions were made and were offered for sale at an undisclosed price, and only to existing SLR customers.

In 2010, though, McLaren itself revived the SLR. Shown unexpectedly at the 2010 Essen Motor Show, the McLaren edition was the last SLR, with revised bodywork, modified steering and suspension. Only 25 were made, allegedly to complete unfulfilled orders from repeat customers.

When the final SLR rolled off the production line in Woking in 2011 McLaren's relationship with Mercedes had also come to an end. The divorce was more for economic than acrimonious reasons, but even so there were engineers within McLaren who put their heads above the parapet to suggest that they weren't entirely happy with the SLR. McLaren's forte was that of pure-bred sports cars, and the SLR was considered by some to be too much of a grand tourer, despite its blistering performance. In reality, the compromise was such that the SLR was almost viable as a daily driver, at least if you were well-heeled enough to afford one.

Around 2,250 SLRs were made during its production run – two thirds of the volume that Mercedes initially predicted, but still enough to make it one of the best-selling high-end supercars of all time. Indeed, that initial grand tourer/sports car compromise may well have been enough to make it the success that it was. »

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McLaren-Mercedes SLR

Most supercars feel like just that – cars designed for a single purpose. That purpose is to go as fast as humanly possible, with maximum drama.

If that's your desire, then the SLR is at risk of disappointing. Unlike some supercars, you don't have to contort yourself to get in. The driving position is adjustable and compromise free, to the extent of even being comfortable. Open the scissor doors and you have to step up to get in, but once you're over the sill structure (essential for the car's torsional rigidity) there's plenty of space to adjust your position. Small, tall, fat or thin, you can make the SLR fit you very comfortably, and I say that as a below average-height chubby bloke.

If you're familiar with any other Mercedes-Benz of the era, the SLR is a comforting place to be. The controls are laid out in the same way as an SL,

or even an E or S-Class – enough to make you realise why contemporary road testers may have suggested it lacked a sense of occasion. But that's unfair.

A nice Mercedes saloon car comes with a sense of occasion. With a strikingly beautiful GT body and a rumbling V8 upfront, it feels like a very special place to be.

Plant the throttle, and it feels even more so. When stationary, a blip of the throttle causes the car to rock gently on its haunches. Release the handbrake, and it lurches forward with alarming alacrity. Drive it hard, and the SLR feels unstoppable, but the brakes are astonishing – even the original car, which didn't have the upgrades of the 722, will scrub off speed more quickly than you could imagine.

In fairness to the car's critics, the

Below: Rear spoiler also acts as an air brake.

SLR doesn't feel as light or as edgy as its contemporaries. You can't drive it with the same lightness of touch you can apply to a Ferrari, for example, and under hard cornering the limit of adhesion is harder to explore. Whereas a smaller, more agile supercar will warn you when it's about to come loose, the SLR's traction control system will kick in long before you think it may be necessary.

To the hardcore enthusiast, then, it isn't quite the raw experience you might crave. But to the day-to-day user, it's a phenomenal car. Comfortable, ludicrously quick, astonishing to look at and surprisingly usable. You need deep pockets to run one and even deeper pockets to buy one in the first place – used values are still more than £200k for a standard model – but the SLR is the definitive usable supercar. 

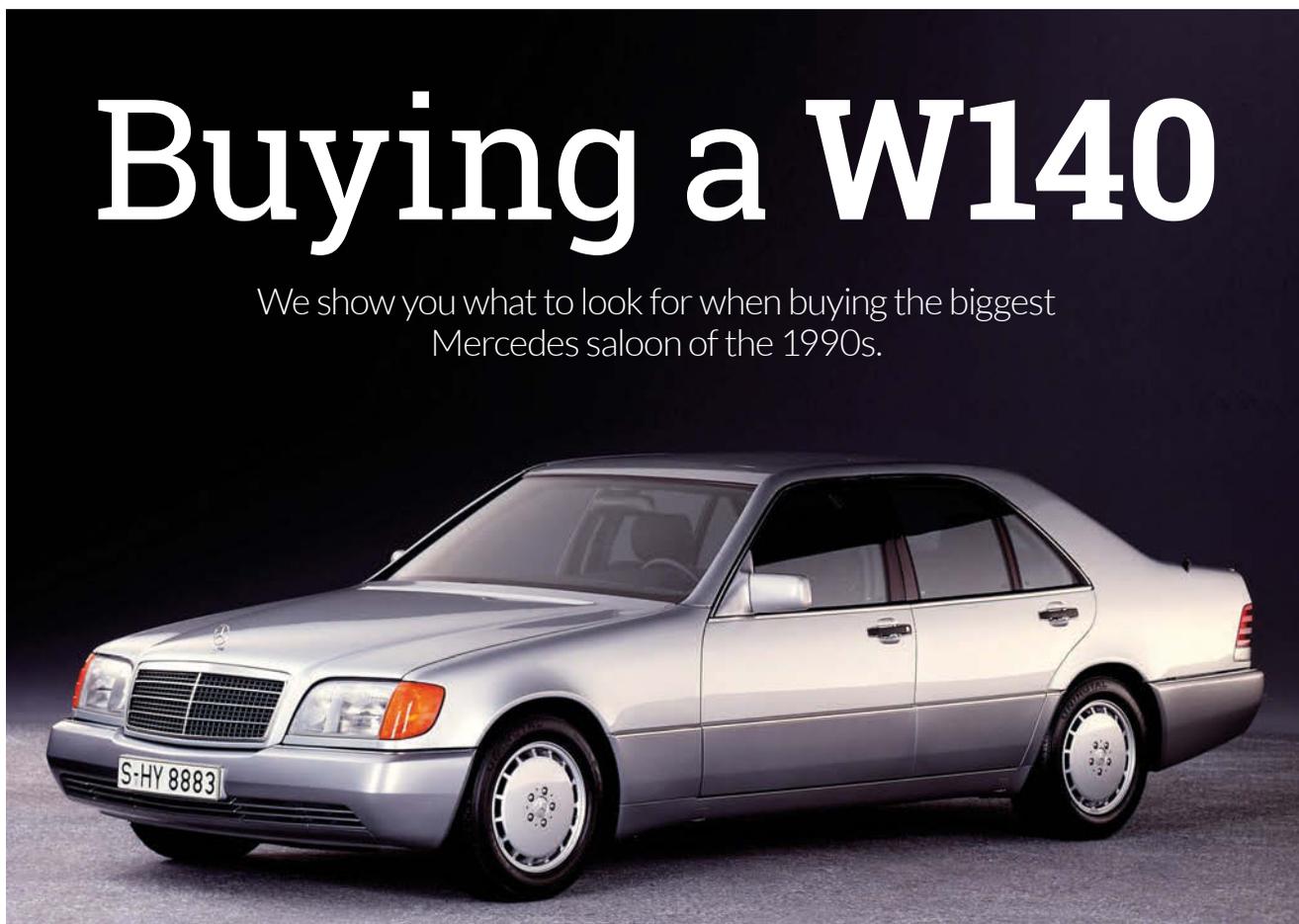




W140 Buying guide

Buying a W140

We show you what to look for when buying the biggest Mercedes saloon of the 1990s.



L launched in 1991, the Mercedes W140 was designed as a replacement for the W126 range of S-class saloons. It was intended as the best car in the world, and carried on Mercedes' tradition of technical innovation to demonstrate that status. Double glazing and parking aids had been previously unheard-of in mainstream cars, and both were available on the biggest Benz of the 1990s as standard.

Development work had begun in 1981, and the car incorporated new features which would become

"The W140 carried on Mercedes' tradition of technical innovation."

Above: The W140 was significantly larger than its predecessor

industry standards, including CANBUS wiring and self-closing panels. Bigger than its predecessor, Mercedes claimed that this was a measure to accommodate the changing size of humans – but most of the world felt that it was a step too far, and too large to be practical. It was the last Mercedes to be created under the eye of Werner Niefer, and was meant as a riposte to the E32 BMW 7-series which had been shown to him ahead of launch by friend Dr Wolfgang Rietzle. The Mercedes would be the best and most imposing car in the world.

Words: Sam Skelton

And yet, with few exceptions, the world rejected it. Deemed an extravagance by most of the press and too large by many of its traditional clientele, the W140 sold in far smaller numbers than its W126 predecessor. Despite its old-school approach and up to date tech, the market initially rejected it. A mid term facelift helped matters, but it's only really now the model has matured into classic status that it has become as desirable as it always ought to have been.

There were three phases of W140 production – phase 1 cars ran from 1991-1994, phase 2 ran from 1994-1996, and phase 3 from 1997 until the W220 was launched in 1998. Phase 2s can be identified by clear indicator lenses, a swage line on the side claddings, and a revised radiator grille. Phase 3s featured white indicator lenses and body coloured claddings.

BODYWORK

The W140 was 2.6 inches wider and 2.3 inches taller than its predecessor, but the length remained broadly similar. The silhouette not only looked



Above: Minor facelifts kept the car fresh.

smoother but was smoother; with a drag coefficient reduced from 0.37Cd to 0-30Cd.

Unlike its predecessor and the majority of similar cars, the W140 is rather resistant to rust. Front

wings can begin to rust where they meet the bumpers and around the indicators owing to trapped mud, but not to the same extent at other, smaller Mercedes can. Wheelarches are another favourite spot on cars which haven't been cared for. An odd W140 trouble spot is around the boot lock area, which can begin to corrode around the barrel. Rear lights can show signs of moisture, which indicates corrosion issues behind the fittings – but as with most W140 corrosion this is often surface. It is very rare to see a car with major holes – if you do, we advise you to walk away and look for one of the scores of better examples for sale.

ENGINES

The W140 range uses a range of engines from the M104, M119, and M120 families. The M104 six-cylinder is used in both 2.8-litre and 3.2-litre variants, the M119 as a 4.2-litre and 5.0-litre V8, and the »



£ *W140 Buying guide*

M120 as a 6.0-litre V12.

The M104 is a reliable engine in use, with its biggest problems being oil leaks. It can leak from around the rocker cover gasket – and from the oil filter. Barring that, these engines are mechanically good, and there is little with which to concern yourself.

"Between 1992 and 1996 Mercedes used biodegradable wiring looms."

The M119 is similarly hardy – though the timing chain and guide should be changed every 90000 miles. If you can't find a receipt in the history file, budget somewhere in the region of £AMOUNT to have it changed. Cam oil feeder tubes can break, though these are simple to replace and aluminium replacements are available.

Early W140s are prone to issues caused by the underbonnet wiring



Above: S600 range topper thirsty but special.

loom. Between 1992 and 1996 Mercedes used biodegradable wiring looms as part of a commitment to the environment – great for the many thousands of recycled cars, but less so for those which have withstood the test of time. It's possible to source a replacement loom, but you should check that the job has been done before you part with your cash, or negotiate a price which accounts for replacement. Budget up to £1000, depending upon how proficient you are and how cheaply you can source a replacement loom.

TRANSMISSION AND SUSPENSION

W140s were supplied with three different types of gearbox: A five speed manual, the 722.3 four speed automatic to 1996, and the 722.6 five-speed automatic from 1996 onwards. The manual is rare and was fitted only to the S280 – the gearbox was shared with the W124 and is a robust gearbox. Likewise both automatics – neither is known for giving faults in service, and both last well.

All W140s used the same basic suspension system; double wishbones at the front with an independent multi-link system at the rear. Coil springs and gas-filled telescopic dampers were used on all four corners, with self-levelling to the rear of the 500 and 600 LWB models. V12s also featured ADS Adaptive Damping, with a choice of Sport and Comfort modes. Check the springs and dampers for signs of wear or leaks, and on test make sure that the adaptive suspension works when fitted. There should be a discernible difference between Comfort and Sport settings.

INTERIOR TRIM

Typically Mercedes W140 interiors are fairly hardy, as evidenced by those which have done 200000 miles or more. Drivers seat bolsters can wear, though this is less common on the more frequently-seen leather interiors. The lacquer on walnut veneers can split, and LCD panels can drop pixels. As a rule, this is about the worst you will find. Mercedes-Benz specialists such as www.w140.com should be able to source the majority of secondhand trim should it be needed – though items for the long wheelbase variants might be harder to find.

It's important to check the self-close door mechanisms.



Right: Cloth interiors rare and relatively undesirable.



£ W140 Buying guide



These operate by vacuum, as with the central locking, and can fail through perished pipework as the cars get older. It can be a faff to fix, albeit relatively inexpensive.

VALUES

The market for the W140 has definitely strengthened of late, and values are beginning to reflect that. Project cars can still be found for under £1000, though the days of finding something usable within that budget are behind us. Cars suitable for everyday use will

Above: Choose carefully and the W140 makes a cracking investment.

typically cost between £1500 and £3500 depending upon condition and model - as a rule the six cylinder models are worth the least, with the S500 and S600 commanding the strongest values. Cars worthy of collectors can command up to £7000, but these will typically be too nice for everyday use. Avoid manuals, cars with cloth seats, steel wheels and no air conditioning. The S-Class was built to be the best car in the world when new, and you may as well enjoy the comforts which come with that.

VERDICT – what to buy

Now is definitely the time to buy the W140 – it's long been undervalued, and as prices for the W126 strengthen more enthusiasts will focus on the W140. We'd avoid S280s, and focus on 300SEs and S320s for regular use. The 500 is a desirable package, while the 400/420 makes a good all-rounder. The V12 is often best spec'd, but costly to fuel and to maintain.

Technical Information

S280

Engine 2799cc/6-cyl/DOHC
Power 190bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 199lb.ft @ 3750rpm
Gearbox 4-spd automatic
0-60 11.0sec
Top Speed 134mph
MPG 23.4

300SE/S320

Engine 3199cc/6-cyl/DOHC
Power 231bhp @ 2320rpm
Torque 232lb.ft @ 3750rpm
Gearbox 4-spd automatic
0-60 8.9sec
Top Speed 140mph
MPG 22.5

400SE/S420

Engine 4196cc/V8/DOHC
Power 275bhp @ 5700rpm
Torque 295lb.ft @ 3900rpm
Gearbox 4-spd automatic
0-60 8.3sec
Top Speed 152mph
MPG 21.2

500SE/S500

Engine 4973cc/V8/DOHC
Power 315bhp @ 5600rpm
Torque 347lb.ft @ 3900rpm
Gearbox 4-spd automatic
0-60 7.3sec
Top Speed 155mph
MPG 21.2

600SE/S600

Engine 5987cc/V12/DOHC
Power 389bhp @ 5200rpm
Torque 420lb.ft @ 3800rpm
Gearbox 4-spd automatic
0-60 6.6sec
Top Speed 155mph
MPG 17.9



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One to buy

1965 Mercedes 190

Cream and red is an excellent colour combination for a classic Mercedes – and while this might be a base spec 190, it's no less charming for it.

Free from much of the chrome trimming of the more upmarket Fintails, this 190 is if anything better for its simplicity. Finished in Ivory and with red trim echoing the traditional German racing colours, it looks the part – and a pleasant change from the black and grey which seem to dominate on these models. There's no rust, and the chrome is all in good condition. The original hubcaps are present and match the body – and it's nice to see that previous owners haven't succumbed to the temptation of whitewall tyres.

"Having been recently serviced, it ran like a new example."

The interior is relatively sparse as a base spec car, but this doesn't mean it's lacking in comforts. None of the plastics on the dash are cracked, which suggests to us that there has been a replacement. The steering wheel however is delightfully patinated – several hairline cracks and the rim is split in a number of places. Yet this doesn't detract – if anything, a small sign of use endears us to the car and makes it feel more like a used and loved example than a museum piece. The seats were recoloured just prior to our test, and the shade of red was a little sudden for our liking. This will settle



Mileage: 27346 km
£15000



Above: Seats have been recoloured recently.



with time and use though, and the interior certainly lives up to the rest.

From cold it starts well, settling into a smooth idle. There's little evidence of recent mechanical work, and while there are invoices in the history file we can't translate from Japanese. It has however been recently serviced and inspected by experienced mechanics, and we had no concerns about how it felt on test. There was no evidence of leaking fluids, and it ran like a new example might.

The gearbox is a delight. Column mounted changes are far nicer than floor mounted gearboxes of this era, and this car is no exception – it takes car on the way from second into third but barring that the gearbox is one of the nicest we've used. The clutch bites fairly high, and it's easy to make rapid progress. Despite the lack of power steering it's not a heavy car to drive, and it's easy to place on the road even as left hand drive. There was a little hesitation early in our test under load at low revs, but this cleared with use and we believe was owing to a period of having been started and moved while cold. It wouldn't deter us from purchase given how rapidly it cleared.

The history file is relatively small, and mostly in Japanese. It is believed that the car was imported from Japan into Britain in 2015, though as we cannot read Japanese we couldn't understand the limited history file. It's not known where the car was prior to its time in Japan, though with the help of Mercedes Benz a potential owner may be able to establish its original country of sale.

CONCLUSION

While it's not the cheapest Fintail on the planet, it's certainly one of the nicest, and it drives just as well as it looks. In years to come, cars like this will appreciate – we'll wish we'd bought them while they were affordable. This car has clearly been cherished – and while we can't trace its history prior to its time in Japan the condition speaks for itself. Don't worry about the lack of cylinders either – it's more than pokey enough and will definitely put a smile on your face.

BUY THIS CAR FROM:

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Auction guide



Words: Justin Lazic

Market Analysis

This month's auction results and market trends, brought to you by auctioneer and market expert **Justin Lazic**



Persistent strong prices for chrome bumper Mercedes models were a hallmark of the November 2017 auction market, but there were some good buying opportunities as well.

With a 75% sale rate, Mercedes are still among the most popular of classics to change hands, right up there with Ford and Mini, and easily the most frequent non-British marque to appear in salerooms across the UK.

With prices between £1,000 and £125,000, there was much to be interested in. Historics

Left: 250S proves that good original cars will always hold value

finished the month strongly on 25 November, selling 19 of the 27 Mercedes offered in their traditional end of year sale at MB World at Brooklands.

Highlights included a delightful W108 250S saloon which indicated a rise in fortunes for four door, chrome bumper models which had dipped slightly in the last couple of years.

Achieving £16,800 including premium, this was a very strong result which exceeds several recent W111 coupe offerings in recent years, proving that the very best examples always seem to attract an audience. »

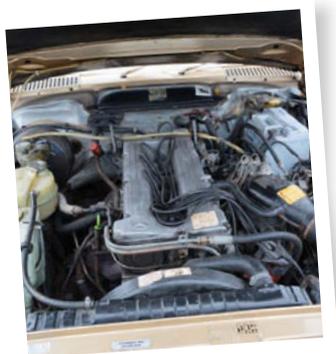
£ Auction guide



"R107s continue to blend chrome bumper lines with many purchasing opportunities."

The key to the 250S' financial performance was its originality. Showing just 23,622 miles and completely original MB-Tex upholstery, its column shift automatic, carburettor specification surely excited those who find Mercedes' quirks of this era irresistible.

The car had been originally delivered to Bill Wyman of Rolling Stones fame, but it is the experience of many that ownership provenance only goes so far when it comes to value realisation.



Above: 280SL made £8400 at Brightwells

On the opposite end of the spectrum, an early W460 280GE made an appearance at Historics and achieved £10,752 including premium, demonstrating ongoing demand and excellent sale rates for these 4x4 variants.

G-Wagens have long been popular due to lack of supply and their inherent ruggedness, and this twin-cam six cylinder example was the top-of-the-range engine choice in 1986 when this example was produced.

Showing only 74,000 miles and presenting in impeccably clean condition, it sported two or three

upgrades from factory specification which on any other model of classic Mercedes is generally a no-no, but it appears the buying demographic can stand a degree of personalisation with these off-road models. The growth of the G-Wagen as a status symbol, especially in central London, is in line with similar evolutions for Range Rover and Bentley's Bentayga.

Meanwhile, R107 SL models continue to be an ideal blend of classic chrome-bumper lines with fantastic parts supply and many purchasing opportunities. Brightwells' 1985 280SL example, the very last of the chrome door-handled SLs, achieved £8,400 including premium on 29 November having been in the same family's ownership from 1994 to 2015.

In period Champagne Gold metallic and running on bundt cake alloy road wheels, it appeared every bit the enthusiast's car and looked set to add to its 134,000 mileage as the years go on - of course, in just 8 years time, it will be tax and MoT exempt.

Brightwells also offered a 1978 W116 450SEL at the same auction, as a project/restoration which



Above: 230SL beat estimate by 28%



Left: Many G-Wagens are personalised by sellers.

was last on the road in 2000. The car's original brown velour interior offered an excellent starting point for restoration as it is usually the hardest item to restore on a Mercedes of this age, especially in velour specification.

Requiring some attention to bodywork in the usual places, nonetheless it achieved £3,136 including premium which demonstrates how hard these W116 S-Classes are to find these days, especially in UK-delivered, right hand drive form.

Also at Historics was a high-achieving 1964 W113 230SL "Pagoda" which achieved £78,400: 28% above its upper estimate. »

£ Auction guide



Above: 450SEL project achieved £3136 at Brightwells



The sales technique of low estimates has its rewards and this example continued the upward trend for Pagodas despite their continued supply to the market. It has been said that as 48,462 were produced, their values could hit the wall at some stage but so far their annual price movements are consistently upward. Compared to the 72,000 E Types produced by Jaguar, the

"Contemporary AMG models are yet to catch up to other modern classic brands."

Pagoda SL is still a comparatively rare model and of course all Pagodas were open-top, fuel injected examples.

Of course an in-depth auction report is incomplete with a reflection on the general reserve trends across the industry. It would seem that contemporary AMG models are still yet to catch up on the curve for other modern classic models by manufacturers such as Ford and Aston-Martin, among others.

The W210 E55 AMG offered by Brightwells on 29 November is a typical case: a right hand drive example showing just 78,000 miles, it was bid to £6,500 in the room but didn't reach the lower estimate of £10,500. The auctioneer certainly did their bit and offered the car in professional fashion, but it is a timely reminder to vendors to always be realistic upon consignment as the market will ultimately always set its price, regardless of reserve.

We will now keep an eye on this car and report back if it is re-consigned with a more realistic reserve.

In next month's column we will assess Bonhams' Bond Street and Olympia auctions, plus keep an eye on Baron's Christmas Classic sale. An enduring myth within the industry has been that the leadup to Christmas is a challenging time to sell at auction, but recent sale rates, especially for Mercedes-Benz models, would tell a different story.

Sold Mercs at auction November 2017

Date	House	Car	Result including premium and VAT	Venue
04/11/17	ACA	1973 R107 350SL	£5040	King's Lynn
04/11/17	ACA	2001 W203 C32 AMG	£4095	King's Lynn
04/11/17	ACA	1964 W110 190S "Fintail"	£10290	King's Lynn
04/11/17	ACA	1989 W201 190E 2.6 (Red)	£1100	King's Lynn
04/11/17	ACA	1992 W201 190E 2.6 (Black)	£1700	King's Lynn
04/11/17	ACA	1970 W115 220 (Red)	£6510	King's Lynn
04/11/17	ACA	1989 W124 230CE	£750	King's Lynn
04/11/17	ACA	1995 W124 E220 Coupe (Silver)	£1450	King's Lynn
04/11/17	ACA	1996 W124 E220 Coupe (Blue)	£2625	King's Lynn
04/11/17	ACA	1973 W115 220 (Green)	£1200	King's Lynn
04/11/17	ACA	1986 R107 300SL (Nautic Blue)	£7770	King's Lynn
04/11/17	ACA	1977 R107 350SL (Petrol Blue)	£9555	King's Lynn
04/11/17	ACA	1989 W124 300E	£1700	King's Lynn
04/11/17	ACA	2000 R170 SLK320	£5145	King's Lynn
04/11/17	ACA	2006 W203 C55 AMG	£7350	King's Lynn
04/11/17	ACA	1999 W220 S500	£3150	King's Lynn
04/11/17	ACA	1993 R129 500SL	£3570	King's Lynn
04/11/17	ACA	1998 W140 S600	£2310	King's Lynn
11/11/17	Silverstone	2002 R230 SL55 AMG	£36563	NEC
11/11/17	Silverstone	1962 W121 190SL (White)	£118125	NEC
11/11/17	Silverstone	1960 W121 190SL (Silver)	£126000	NEC
15/11/17	H&H	1974 C107 450SLC	£10669	IWM, Duxford
15/11/17	H&H	1982 R107 280SL	£10125	IWM, Duxford
15/11/17	H&H	1993 W460 300GD	£7425	IWM, Duxford
15/11/17	H&H	1956 W186 300C "Adenauer" Saloon	£16875	IWM, Duxford
15/11/17	H&H	1954 W186 300B "Adenauer" Cabriolet	£104420	IWM, Duxford
15/11/17	H&H	1991 W460 300GEL	£11250	IWM, Duxford
15/11/17	H&H	1955 W186 300C "Adenauer" Saloon	£4540	IWM, Duxford
25/11/17	Historics	1966 W108 250S	£16800	Mercedes-Benz World
25/11/17	Historics	1989 R107 500SL	£19040	Mercedes-Benz World
25/11/17	Historics	1997 R129 SL320 (Silver)	£7280	Mercedes-Benz World
25/11/17	Historics	1977 R107 350SL	£8100	Mercedes-Benz World
25/11/17	Historics	2002 W220 S400	£12600	Mercedes-Benz World
25/11/17	Historics	1986 W460 280GE	£10752	Mercedes-Benz World
25/11/17	Historics	1997 R129 SL320 (Blue)	£10864	Mercedes-Benz World
25/11/17	Historics	1970 W113 280SL "Pagoda"	£57120	Mercedes-Benz World
25/11/17	Historics	1991 R129 500SL "Pre-Cat"	£7840	Mercedes-Benz World
25/11/17	Historics	1956 W121 190SL	£81760	Mercedes-Benz World
25/11/17	Historics	1986 R107 500SL	£16800	Mercedes-Benz World
25/11/17	Historics	1980 W123 280CE (Restoration)	£1008	Mercedes-Benz World
25/11/17	Historics	1983 R107 280SL	£8960	Mercedes-Benz World
25/11/17	Historics	1985 R107 380SL	£26880	Mercedes-Benz World
25/11/17	Historics	2005 W221 S500	£16800	Mercedes-Benz World
25/11/17	Historics	1964 W113 230SL "Pagoda"	£78400	Mercedes-Benz World
25/11/17	Historics	2004 R230 SL350	£12880	Mercedes-Benz World
25/11/17	Historics	1993 W201 190E	£1232	Mercedes-Benz World
25/11/17	Historics	1976 W115 220D	£2912	Mercedes-Benz World
29/11/17	Brightwells	1985 R107 350SL	£8400	Leominster
29/11/17	Brightwells	1978 W116 450SEL	£3136	Leominster
29/11/17	Brightwells	1993 W140 600SEC	£2240	Leominster
29/11/17	Brightwells	1993 R129 600SL	£20020	Leominster
29/11/17	Brightwells	1988 W126 500SEC	£5600	Leominster



One to buy



1967 Mercedes 250S

This 250S is a good original example – it isn't concours, but it's in lovely condition and an excellent period colour.

This car was restored by its previous owner in 2014, over the course of 9 months, by a Polish specialist. This work included a full respray in its original Titanium Grey, plus a replacement vinyl roof. The underside was attended to at the same time, and this car remains rust free. Some of the chrome displays minor pitting, but in our view this adds to what is an excellent example – it looks age appropriate rather than conspicuously new. The hubcaps are in good condition, though we aren't entirely sure that the whitewall tyres are the wisest choice for this car.

When the car was restored the interior was replaced, with new black MB-Tex trim, new wood, new carpets and a new headlining. Four years on



these are still in excellent condition without looking too new. The seats are delightfully comfortable, the controls tactile, and it even smells like an old Mercedes should smell. All the wood – both the lighter wood across the demist vents and the darker stained wood forming the dash facing – is in good condition too, free from lacquer blemishes or cracks.

It starts easily from cold, the automatic choke functioning properly, and there are no signs of fluid leaks under the bonnet. A recent brake master cylinder is accompanied by a gearbox rebuild, which was completed last year at a cost of £2800+VAT. This was prompted by an MoT pass – following which the car would not engage reverse to back off the ramp. It does however engage forward and reverse gears now!

Mileage: 80955 km
Price not stated.

The reverse-pattern automatic selector takes a little getting-used-to, with P at the bottom rather than the top. But it engages well, and is relatively smooth for a 1960s automatic. There's plenty of poke, and the car kicks down readily when asked. It steers nicely, with little effort needed, and is easy to place despite being left hand drive. It doesn't wander in winds, nor does it require much correction on the road – it is sure footed and feels like a quality product. We were warned that the car had been missing under load by the dealer, but given that this didn't occur on test we believe it was as a result of a previous low fuel level.

"The reverse-pattern automatic selector takes a little getting-used-to."

There's very little in the history file, though it is believed that this car spent a considerable number of years in the ownership of a single Belgian family. There is a copy of the original logbook, as well as a UK V5 which shows that the car was imported in October 2015. Bills are limited, though there is a stronger verbal history and a copy of a previous auction release when the car was first sold in the UK.



Above: Respray work was effective – and the original colour suits it.



CONCLUSION

The dealer is reticent about selling this car, given its condition there is a temptation to allow it to realise its true value at auction. But if we had some spare cash, we would be there bidding. We'd like to see some more period-appropriate registration plates, but overall it's a tidy example of an appreciating model. It looks, feels and drives the part, and will make an excellent investment for someone looking for a 1960s Mercedes.

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W123 Service guide

W123 ENGINE GUIDE

We take a look at the powerplants lurking under your W123's bonnet.



Arguably the most iconic product of Daimler Benz AG, the W123 range of saloons and its coupe and estate car relatives were built for nine years with a total production figure of a whopping 2.7 million of which nearly 2.4 million were the four door saloons alone - just 99,000 coupes were built and 200,000 estates.

The W123 used various engine ranges, some inherited from the previous 'New Generation' W114/115 cars and later ones that found homes in the replacement W124 and the 190E ranges. Here's

Main: W123s came with a range of petrol and diesel powerplants

"A whopping 2.7 million W123s were produced."

the lowdown on what units were fitted to which cars.

THE SILVER TOP M115

So called because the cam cover was plain aluminium, the M115 was an iron block alloy headed single overhead camshaft four cylinder unit. Available as a carburettor 95 bhp motor, it was first seen in the 1968 W115 New Generation cars. Even then, the M115 was a development of the previous 1.9 litre M121 unit that goes way back to the 1950s: Mercedes was into careful development back then and not radical change.

Words: Andrew Everett



The 2.0 unit as fitted the the W123 Mercedes 200 had an 87 mm bore and a crank stroke of 83.6 mm to give a capacity of 1988 cc. The unit featured a double roller (duplex) timing chain, forged steel crankshaft and the promise of a long life. Carburation was by a single Stromberg CDT 175 carburettor.

Moving up a peg, the 230 was powered by a 2307 cc version of the same engine, combining the same crank as the 200 engine but with a massive 93.8 mm bore. This engine was fitted to both the 230 saloon where the 109 bhp was keenly felt and the stylish new C123 Coupe, the 230C. Very early T estate cars also had the 2.3 unit, not that you'll see many in the UK.

As an engine, the M115 was the last of the simple yet over-engineered Mercedes four pots. It's a non-crossflow unit with the distributor mounted on the other side of the block, and the camshaft and tappet arrangement (fingers) was clearly copied by Ford for the Pinto units – the cam runs in three bearings. Given regular oil changes, the '115' is a unit that will run indefinitely. There isn't a mileage limit as such and its life is determined by how regularly it's serviced. It's superbly engineered and lovely to work on.



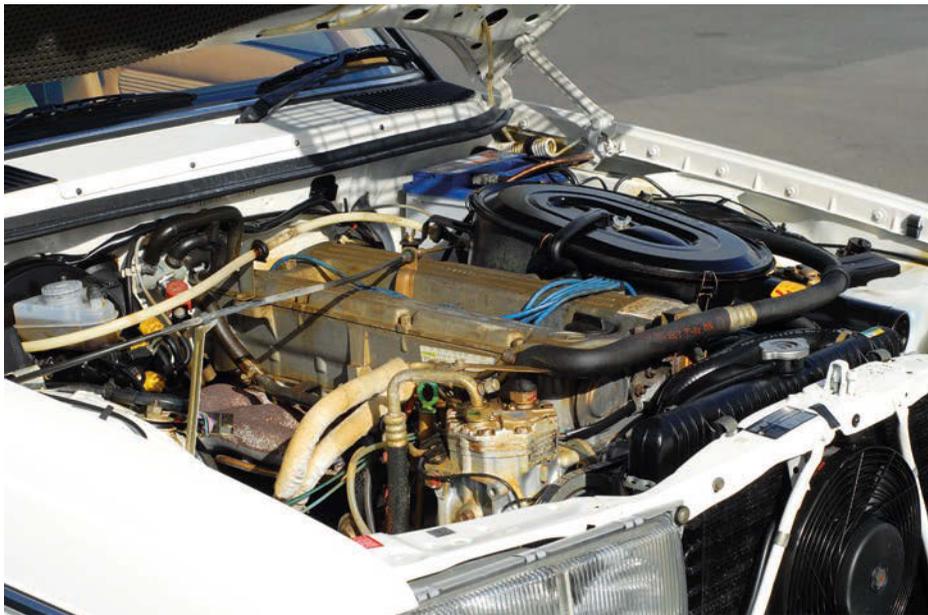
Above: Blacktop M102 an improvement over its predecessor

THE BLACK TOP M102

As tough as the old M115 was, it was just that: old. It lagged way behind the BMW M20 2.0 and 2.3 sixes in most departments and so a new engine arrived in late 1980. A 200 was available again, with a bore of 89mm and a stroke of 80.25 to give a capacity of 1997 cc. A 230 was also made with a bigger 95.5 mm bore to give 2299 cc but was now the 230E with Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection to give a power output of 136 bhp. Whilst the 200 was its usual pedestrian self, the 230E and TE/CE cars were a huge improvement. »



W123 Service guide



It rightly became the biggest seller, combining useful performance with excellent economy and remarkably quiet high speed cruising. In fact many felt it was a better choice than the 280E.

As an engine, the M102 is still an iron block, alloy headed SOHC unit. But unlike the previous M115 it's now a crossflow unit and the camshaft and rocker design in not unlike the straight-six Rover unit with rocker fingers spreading outwards to operate valves set at an angle in a hemi combustion chamber. The cam itself is driven by a single row timing chain and whilst this undoubtedly made the engine more efficient, it did prove to be a problem and noisy timing chains were an M102 hallmark - when the engine was revised for later W124 models from around 1987 it was fitted with a duplex chain. Hydraulic tappets were phased in around 1984 as well. Head gasket failure is also fairly common and whilst the carbureted versions are easy to work on, the 230E is less so due to the way almost half the car

Right: M110 twin cam, as seen in the W123's predecessor.

"The M110 was based on the bones of the old single cam M130."

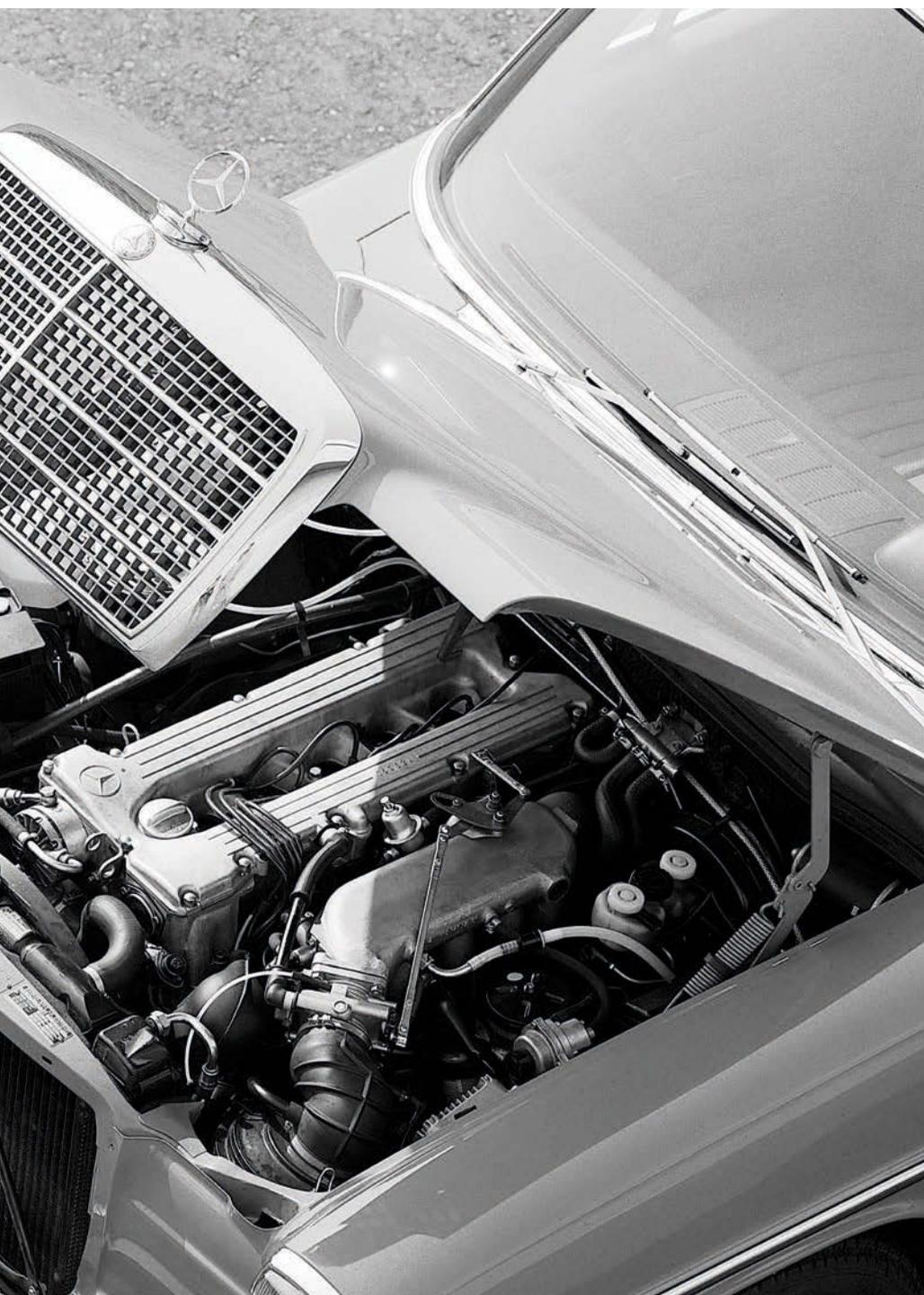
seems to be clustered onto the inlet side of the engine.

The M102 got over its early gripes and spawned the six-cylinder M103 (260E) and ran until 1993/4 when it was replaced by the superb M111 engine - another long-lasting Mercedes legend.

THE TWIN CAM M110

This old stager went back to 1972 when it was first seen in the W115 New Generation 280 as well as the S-Class W116 280S and 280SE. Based on the bones of the old single-cam 280 unit (the M130,





itself a derivative of the M130 six), the M110 featured a new twin cam crossflow cylinder head albeit with two valves per cylinder. However, the 2778 cc of the M130 was not carried over; with an 86 mm bore and a 78.8 mm stroke it gives 2746 cc and when fitted to the W123 in Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection form only for the UK, it gave a useful 185 bhp. A 156 bhp carburettor 280 was available in some markets but with the dreadful Solex 4A1 carb.

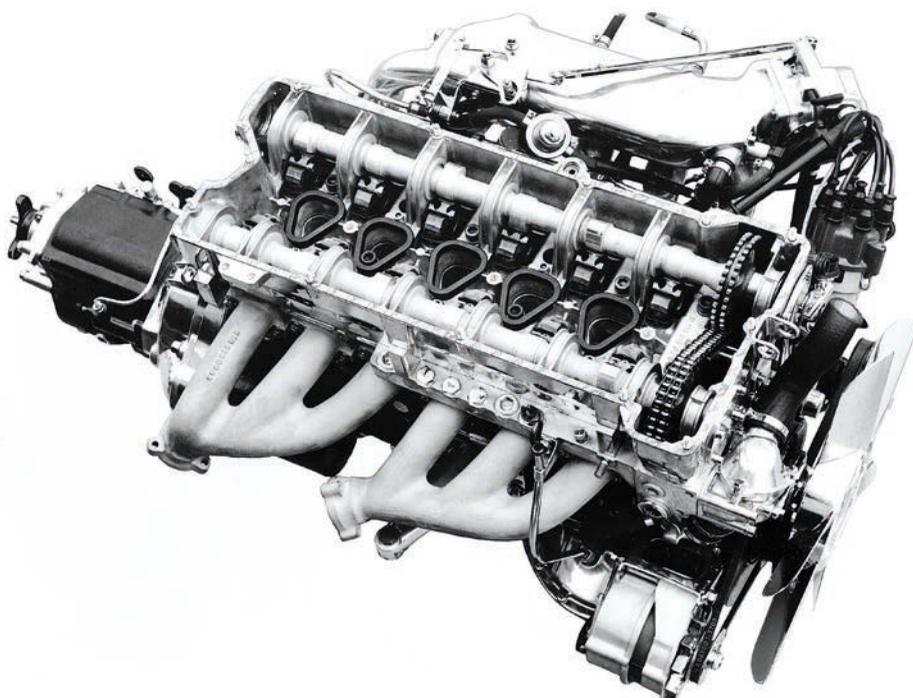
The 280E was a good car, but it wasn't known for great economy and the M110 was never as lively as the 2.8 BMW M30 even though on paper it sported a single extra bhp. But it was as strong as a horse and rarely suffered the BMW's camshaft wear and given regular servicing, it's another over-engineered old slogger that will run for years. Actual problems include the head gasket and the oil pump drive. Mercedes supposedly improved this in 1976 for the W123 but it was still happening on cars built in the 1980s albeit quite rarely.

THE SINGLE CAM 250 ENGINE: THE M123

Before the M102 appeared, Mercedes needed a model to fit between the 230 and 280E and the 250 was to be it. In reality it wasn't very good, having pedestrian performance and poor economy. The 250 used a new engine, a 2.5 litre carburettor straight six that was developed from the old single cam M180. With a four-bearing crankshaft whose stroke was 72.4 mm and an 86 mm bore, capacity was 2525 cc and with the Solex 4A1 DVG carburettor (four barrel) it gave 129 bhp. However, fuel consumption was pretty savage. Many owners found that their 250 would struggle to average 20 mpg and after the M102-engined 230E arrived in late 1980, the 250 was near-enough redundant. The Solex four barrel »



W123 Service guide



carb was notoriously unreliable and the 250 became known as the W123 Merc to steer clear of. However, the actual engine itself was a tough old thing and it's another old Benz unit whose life is determined by maintenance... although bore wear caused by an over-rich mixture ruined a lot of them.

The M123 is a good engine in search of a proper carburettor, and a suitable replacement such as a Weber 40 twin choke or even a new four barrel Holley or Edelbrock would transform it. Even Mercedes

Above: M110 twin camshafts clearly visible with cam cover removed.

"The OM615 is the heart of the 200D
"Beirut taxi."

tried to improve the 250: in late 1981 the combustion chambers were revised to improve the dismal economy that was worse than a 280E. But, as a weekend toy a good 250 is absolutely fine and the unit is very smooth.

THE OM615 AND OM616 DIESELS

Derived from the 1958 OM621 diesel engine, the four cylinder OM615 diesel (OM for OelMotor or oil engine) is the heart of the 'Beirut taxi' 200D Merc. It's closely related to the old silver top M115 petrol - it was first seen in 1968 that itself was developed from a previous 1950s unit. The 200D is a 1988 cc unit with the same bore and stroke as the 200 petrol as well as a whopping 55 bhp (increased to 66 bhp in 1979), and it used Bosch indirect mechanical fuel injection. Although it wasn't sold here, there was also a 220D built between 1976 and 1979 featuring a bigger capacity 2197 cc engine.

The extra capacity was achieved by lengthening the crankshaft stroke to 92.4 mm. Power was 59 bhp and it was discontinued in 1979 when the 60 bhp 200D arrived. The OM615 ran until 1985 and the final end of W123 production.

The OM616 arrived in 1976 with the W123 and it was not an engine used in the previous W114 range. It's similar in design to the OM615 but not much interchanges. It has a 91 mm bore and a stroke of 92.4 mm to give 2404cc - later units had a stroke of 90.9 mm to give 2399 cc to bring it under 2.4 litres for taxation purposes but really, they're all much the same.

WHAT ENGINES, WHAT CARS?

**CAR
ENGINE YEARS
CAPACITY POWER TORQUE**

200
M115 76-80
1988 cc 98 bhp
117lb.ft

200
M102 80-85
1997 cc 109 bhp
125lb.ft

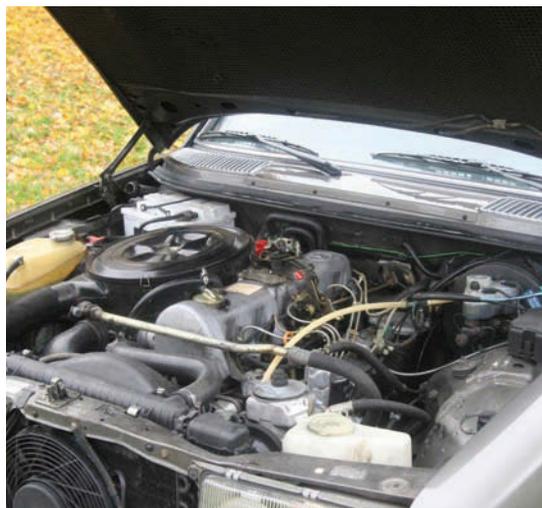
230
M115 76-80
2307 cc 109 bhp
137lb.ft

230E
M102 80-85
2299 cc 136 bhp
151lb.ft

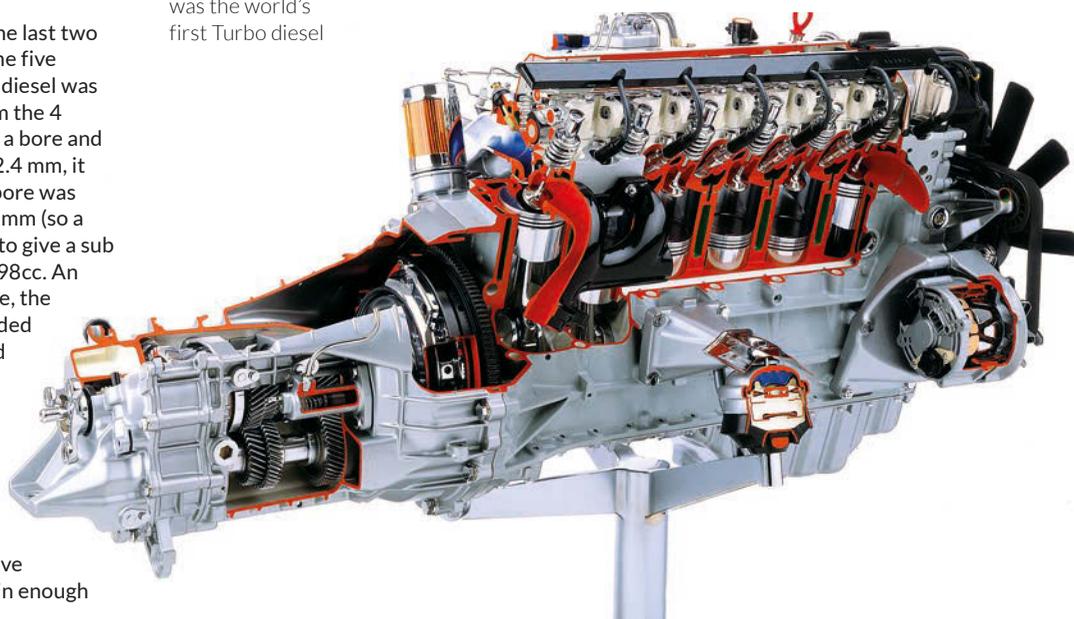
The OM615 and 616 are incredibly strong engines – these are genuine half million mile units if treated well. Problems are few and boil down to old age and plain old wear and tear. What's amazing is that the OM616 is still in production. Mercedes themselves finished with it in the mid 1980s when it was replaced by the OM617 (itself based on the OM616) but in 1982, Daimler Benz went into partnership with Force Motors in India to produce obsolete Mercedes vehicles such as the original G Wagen and the 207D van. These are still powered by the OM616 diesel, an engine that can trace its roots way back 60 years.

THE OM617 FIVE CYLINDER, 300D AND THE FIRST TURBODIESEL

Launched in 1974 for the last two years of the W114/5, the five cylinder 3 litre OM617 diesel was developed directly from the 4 cylinder OM616. With a bore and stroke of 91 mm and 92.4 mm, it gave 3005cc until the bore was reduced in 1979 by 0.1 mm (so a service oversize away) to give a sub 3000 cc capacity of 2998cc. An incredibly strong engine, the OM617 is widely regarded as the most reliable and longest lasting internal combustion engine ever. Whilst arch rivals BMW had a 2 litre six cylinder turbo diesel ready for production in 1977/8, they did not have the facilities to build it in enough



Above: OM617 was the world's first Turbo diesel



volume and so when Mercedes introduced the US-market W116 S Class 300SD, they became the world's first manufacturer to market a turbodiesel car.

To make the OM617 ready for a turbo, it was modified with oil cooling jets for the piston undersides, sodium-filled valves, a new stronger crankshaft and a high flow oil pump.

Power jumped from the 88 bhp of the normally aspirated unit to 111 bhp, later raised to 121 bhp.

In 1981, the turbocharged unit was fitted to W123 cars and the 300TD Estate was thus the only W123 derivative to use this engine in Europe although a 300CD was built for North America.

Tech specs for the W123

250
M123 76-84
2525 cc 135 bhp
144lb.ft

280E
M110 76-85
2746 cc 185 bhp
173lb.ft

200D
OM615 76-85
1988 cc 66 bhp
82lb.ft

240D
OM616 76-85
2399 cc 72 bhp
101lb.ft

300D
OM617 76-85
3005 cc 88 bhp
126lb.ft

300TD
OM617 81-85
2998 cc 121 bhp
169lb.ft



Technical Tips



Worse than it looks...

By and large, the W124 estates have a 'last forever, little of any consequence ever goes wrong' reputation. The downside of this, of course, is that it tends to attract owners who also believe the cars will still run forever with little or no maintenance – and that plainly is not the case. The estates are especially prone to hard later lives with jobbing builders and the like; the cars which have survived into classic ownership are, by and large, ones which have remained long-term with a small number of private owners.

Anyway, there is one specific fault on the 3 litre 24v diesels which is potentially serious, but can look a lot less so to the uninitiated. It concerns a coolant leak from the

Above: W124 diesels last forever – but only if cared for.

back of the engine on, as you look into the bay, the right-hand side – that's the nearside for right-hand drive cars. There's a core plug in the block here and these can and do leak. Rectification is a bit tricky due to lack of access and can cause a few bruised knuckles if you don't do this sort of thing often. A certain amount of dismantling is also needed, but it's straightforward enough if you're used to a bit of 'spannering', and an irritation rather than terminal.

However, another, rather more serious fault can give very similar symptoms. These engines can suffer from head gasket failure between the water jacket and the outside world. The cylinders aren't normally affected, so there are no running faults; the only sign anything is wrong

is slight-at-first coolant loss.

But the usual place for the gasket to fail is at the back of the engine, just above the core plug that's also prone to failure! No head gasket job is totally straightforward, and on this engine the 24v head and chain-driven cams make it even more complex. Then there's the possibility that the head will need skimming – the longer the gasket's been leaking and the greater the leak, the more likely you'll need to involve a machine shop.

So if you suspect – or a non-specialist has diagnosed – a failed core plug, it's probably well worth a closer look first, and if the trail of leaking coolant starts at the head/block joint above the core plug there may be a bit more to fixing the fault than you think...

Words: Peter Simpson



Safe and Sound

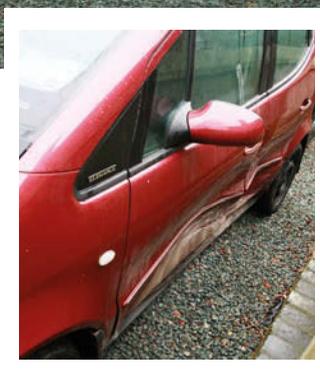
One Mercedes which, sad to say, doesn't have the best reputation in the world is the first-generation A-Class. It seems to me that these never really recovered from the 'elk test' mauling they received shortly after going on sale. I also think the adverse publicity was a tad unfair – pretty-much any car can be made to tip over if you really want to – but I'll save that discussion for another time.

Anyway, a few years ago, the Simpson family ran a 2001 A170 diesel auto as a second car/family runabout for local trips and the school run; it was a low mileage car in excellent condition, the spec was exactly right and, most important of all, the price was also very right. That car served us well for nearly two years, but it was the way in which it departed that impressed me most.

As I say, it was a second car and used mainly by Sarah to take our children to and from school and afterschool activities. On one such trip she was driving past a junction where a side road joined from the left. Somehow, the driver of a large white delivery van didn't see her, and drove straight out

Top: Old A Class, new A Class. The Y reg car looks fine here, but has actually had a side-impact to the nearside.

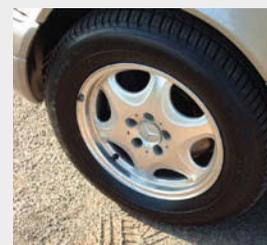
Inset: Result of the impact; write off yes, but much less severe than you'd expect from a hit at 30mph, and the passenger compartment remained intact.



into the side of the A-Class, pushing it right across to the other side of the road, and causing severe damage to the nearside. The attending police reckoned he was doing 'at least 30' at the time of impact.

However the double-skinned floorpan did exactly what it was supposed to, the passenger cabin remained intact, and Sarah and the kids were able to get out the other side; a bit shaken of course, but no injuries - not even a scratch! Had they been in something like a Renault Clio or Nissan Micra then I'm sure the story would have been very different!

Needless to say that A170 was like-for-like replaced by another; thankfully that car's inbuilt safety was never put to the test, but it was certainly reassuring to know that it was there if needed.



Aggro with alloys

By and large, 'punctures' are much less prevalent these days than in times past – it's no longer that rare to come across a ten-plus year old car on which the spare wheel (if there is one...) has never been used. However a slow pressure loss – maybe 2-3psi a month – can be an issue on alloy-wheeled cars, especially little-used ones.

The cause is alloy corrosion on the wheel lip which stops the tyre from sealing properly. The problem is now extremely well-known in the tyre industry, and cleaning the rim is now generally accepted as part and parcel of fitting a new tyre on an alloy. However corrosion can still occur with the tyre in place, and is more likely if a tyre stays on a wheel for longer than the usual renewal cycle – as is often the case with low mileage cars owned by enthusiasts. The cure involves taking the tyre off, removing the rust, and refitting. You'll probably want to have the wheel and tyre balance checked as well, but even so it's not going to be a dear fix.



Technical Tips



Trim Tip

As car enthusiasts, we frequently do jobs which involve removal of a trim panel or two; maybe to get inside a door for a bit of rust-proofing or to renew something such as a failed window winder or motor. Mercedes owners have one big advantage here; by and large the clips used, and the trims themselves, are made from stronger stuff than on 'lesser makes', meaning there's much less risk of breakage.

However trying to remove ANY clip-on trim panel using a screwdriver makes the job far harder than it needs to be, and massively increases the risk of damage when (not if) the screwdriver slips. You really are better off investing a few quid – less than a tenner – in a proprietary trim removal tool like mine shown here – though I should perhaps mention that “other makes are available”. The tool works by lifting the panel on both sides while at the same time pressing in the locking part of the clip which holds it in place. This way the clip can come out of its hole cleanly and with nothing breaking. Worth every penny!

Disc Thickness Variation

Here's a tip which might help you avoid renewing brake discs twice within a short space of time. When you're renewing discs, do make sure that the disc mating surface on the wheel bearing carrier behind is clean, so that the disc sits exactly straight. I do this using a drill-mounted wire brush or a piece of emery paper.

Not a lot of people know this after fitting a new brake disc, you're supposed to measure the 'runout' – ie the amount that the disc's outer edge moves in and out – using a dial gauge; they'll be a maximum figure somewhere in the small print of your workshop manual. If the surfaces are clean and rust-free (and, of course, you're using decent quality parts) the figure will be within limits. If, though, something is stopping the disc from sitting straight, it will be off.

At first, you probably won't notice much if the disc runout isn't right. A few months in, though, you'll notice

Above: Always ensure that new brake discs are sitting straight and on a clean, rust-free mating surface.

a vibration on braking which gets steadily worse and assume – or be told – that your new discs were faulty and have warped. So you try to claim on the supplier's warranty – and possibly without even inspecting the 'faulty' discs, they reject your claim!

That's because they know the fault is down to the discs having worn unevenly, due to one part coming into contact with the disc pads on each revolution of the disc, resulting in that part wearing much more rapidly than the rest of the disc. Eventually this Disc Thickness Variation (or DTV) is severe enough to cause noticeable vibration on braking. DTV is extremely well-known to brake disc manufacturers. They also know that it's virtually impossible for a cast disc to warp on a car if it's been fitted correctly, and faulty installation is pretty-much the only thing which can cause a disc which wasn't causing vibration at the time of installation to do so a few months later.





Water water everywhere...

This is the time of year when if a car boot can leak, it most likely will, and while Mercedes build quality certainly helps us here, Stuttgart cars certainly aren't immune.

Finding the source can, though, be a difficult and infuriating business; I once heard of a W123 owner who was so infuriated by the whole business that he somehow managed to persuade his partner (who was somewhat smaller than he..) to go in the boot with a torch while he poured water over it, in the hope that she'd be able to see where it was coming in. This is definitely NOT a technique that I recommend – either from a practical or relationship-building perspective - as quite apart from safety considerations, it's highly unlikely to reveal anything within the time that anyone would want to spend in a boot.

Anyway, here are a few tips. Firstly, once water has entered an open box such as a car boot will always find the lowest place it can. This means that where the water finishes up – a spare wheel well for example – bears no relation at all to where it came in; spray under a car may look dramatic, but the chances of water being forced



up through a gap big enough to let it in but small enough to then retain it are pretty-much zero!

If, though, you are able to trace the damp up and find the highest damp spot, that might well provide a clue, though watch out for damp caused by condensation. Broadly speaking the same 'highest point is point of entry' rule also applies to damp trim.

Contrary to popular belief boot seals are rarely the culprit – at least not on Mercedes - they're well designed and made, and generally withstand normal opening and shutting. You may, though, find that the water is getting in through rear light seals which can fail after a while; if you suspect this, it's probably worth resealing as a matter of course;

some are held in by mastic, others use a foam 'gasket' which in time crumbles to dust.

The other common cause is one people often miss – the window rubber above the bootlid. These always have a limited life and when the rear one starts to leak, any water that gets past will almost certainly enter the boot and end up at the bottom. The actual amount of water which gets past the rubber each time it rains may not be great, but with nowhere to escape, it soon builds up.

Finally, bear in mind that, depending on the design of the shell, what seems at first like a rainwater leak into the main cabin of the car might actually be a boot leak that's been present for some time and spread via the rear seat base. This can be a particular issue on cars that have moulded carpets backed by thick foam. This foam backing will usually absorb several litres of water before the carpets show the slightest sign of the swamp that's lurking underneath. When this happens the only proper cure is to take the carpets right out and dry everything thoroughly. This is important, as there are usually lots of complex electrics underneath, and water and electricity definitely do not get on...

Above: Rainwater entering the boot is a common problem on older cars, and Mercedes are certainly not immune as this W123 shows

AND FINALLY..

Here's a little quiz, probably for the W124 experts reading this. As you can see, the accompanying photo is of a 300D diesel engine bay. However the car has a potentially very expensive-to-fix fault, and the picture contains a big clue as to what's wrong. Feel free to write or email in if you can see it – though there are no prizes. I'll reveal the answer next month.





Sam Skelton Editor



Daily Service

Our Editor's 280TE is providing sterling service... but there's plenty to be done.

I've harboured a fascination for old Mercedes since I was knee high to a grasshopper. Where my coevals craved the Corvette, lusted after Lamborghinis, and fancied Ferraris, my bedroom walls were host to equally upmarket but far more sensible cars. The Bentley Turbo R, Jaguar XJR and Mercedes W123 were cars I grew up wanting – and as a motoring journalist I'm lucky enough to have been able to spend time with all three.

But no matter what else is on the fleet, I need a sensible everyday car – something I feel comfortable using on

"I wanted an S124 - a six cylinder one."

long journeys, something practical and sensible, something to ensure my toys aren't exposed to a (typically mild) English winter. I had a cheap Jaguar Sovereign, but memories dictated that it had to go. I wanted an S124 to replace it. A six cylinder one.

Enter Roger Tompkins of the W124 Shop. I had heard by word of mouth

Above: 280TEs are rare - made for just eight months between October 1992 and June 1993.

that his 280TE might be for sale, and had in fact been advertised at last year's W124 day. A seemingly perfect car? Roger put me under no illusions of perfection – the car – but it was a lot better than a cheap S124 has any right to be. 8 months MoT, solid front wings, a mostly good interior, and no transmission faults.

A deal was done and I drove away a happy man.

What have I bought? It's a 1992 280TE – an oddity produced between the introduction of the M104 engine and the facelift just eight months later. It's Arctic White with black leather, 7 seats and a few other nice toys. It's been

1992 Mercedes 280TE
 Mileage: 199345
 First instalment

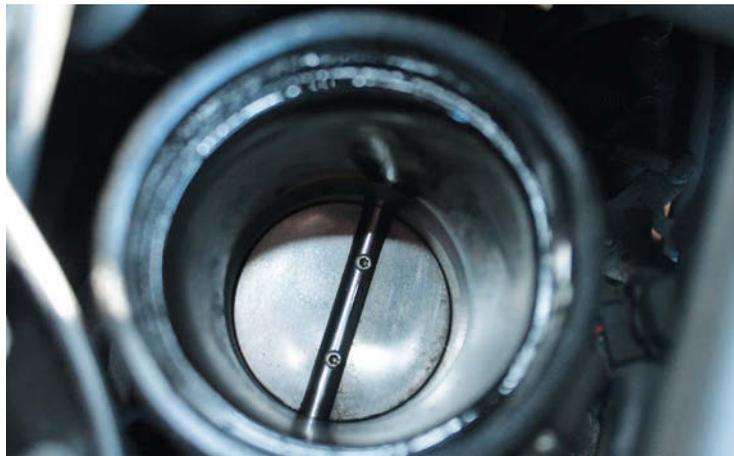
decked out as a replica of the Mercedes Roadside Service cars from the 1980s and early 1990s – I'm not entirely sure about it and I'm considering removing the stripes, but I could be swayed into keeping them. 500 miles in, I still like it – even though I've identified a list of issues I need to work my way through.

Firstly, the wheels were quite severely out of balance – not helped at the back by one perished tyre and one mismatched 195/60/15. Neither of these facts were helping the tired nearside rear wheel bearing, which is a priority fix. The sunroof is currently inoperative, as is the air conditioning. And most oddly, there is a vacuum leak in the engine bay which is having a detrimental effect on the car's idle.

Once I got the car home I could have kicked myself for a simple schoolboy error. I managed to miss the rust under the nearside rear window, above the spare wheel. And there was a lot of it. Something that required a rapid solution...

Progress has not been slow either. Within the first week of ownership I had replaced the rear tyres with a matched pair and had the wheels balanced, courtesy of local tyre shop Fishers of March. I've also treated the area under the rear window with Kurust as a temporary measure, prior to having the metal reinstated. I now have a Mercedes that I am confident is not corroding, and which drives largely like an old Mercedes should.

I had been advised by a former S124 owning friend that cleaning out the throttle body might be a wise move. Unwise on my part – because of clumsiness. Unscrewing the inlet pipe to the throttle body proved easy, as did cleaning the throttle body itself. Using carburettor cleaner and a rag tied to a screwdriver, I operated the butterfly and cleaned off the deposits around the edges. I now have a nice clean inlet, not likely to be introducing any leaks itself. However, as I leaned across the engine to do this a loud crack signalled the end of the plastic return valve in the brake



"There is a vacuum leak affecting my idle."

Above: Cleaning the throttle body helped. Clumsiness didn't.

is playing havoc with my idle. Start from cold and following an initial spurt, the car settles down to an idle of 0rpm. Fine. Restart the engine, and it repeats unless you hold the throttle open at around 2500rpm for a few seconds. Occasionally it will just about idle, until you engage a gear. At which point it cuts out. OVP relay? Fuel pump relay? Or a symptom of the vacuum leak? Given time, we shall see... but if you have any ideas, get in touch via the mag.



Jack O'Brien Club Editor

1990 Mercedes 500SE

Mileage: 81458

First instalment

Rescued From the Dust

Our Club Editor's 500SE that has been sitting idle since 2012 is brought back to life.

The W126 is always a car that has interested me, it is the last partial chrome bumper Mercedes Benz ever produced, the last to use the M110, M103, M116 and M117 six and eight cylinder petrol engines, as well as the last S Class to follow the archetypal Sacco design language. The W140 that succeeded it was in its own right an absolutely superb automobile and even now 26 years after its initial debut, you are still blown away by the smoothness of the powertrain and the general isolation from the outside world thanks to the use of double glazing and acres of sound deadening. In my mind, the W140 is probably the most complete S Class ever made.

However, that does not detract from the classic appeal of the W126, which especially in SEC form is currently enjoying a widely documented renaissance. So I thought it was about time I found out what the fuss was all about, and obviously had to find myself a total shed, with which I would undoubtedly lose patience, blood, sweat, tears, the lot...

I found this rather sorry looking 81,000 mile Diamond Blue 500SE, which is quite an uncommon car in itself being both V8 and short wheelbase. I found it through a family friend whose yard it had been sitting in for some months, following lack of use from its previous, now sadly departed owner. From what I can see so far, the car itself is in pretty good, fairly original condition – it has been painted at some point, but by this age they all have – doesn't seem to be suffering from any major rust and crucially the bumper chrome is all in good condition.

The cost of new chrome is now



£1700 from the dealer and the second hand supply is very thin on the ground. The bumpers therefore can still make the difference whether a four door car is worth restoring or not. Usually Coupes are worth the expenditure but the market for most driver standard, presentable but sub-concours level cars sadly does not yet justify this level of outlay.

Back with the 500SE and naturally with jump leads attached the 5.0 M116 V8 fired straight back in to life, for all of a minute before running out of fuel. Now this is where the fun really begins. The car had been left locked, and having been stood the vacuum supply to the

Above Right: Full House. Heated front seats, Electric blind and the all important Becker Mexico

central locking had depleted. This meant that when we initially unlocked it, only the driver's door had opened hence the petrol cap was still locked, and now the car is out of fuel and won't run sufficiently to rebuild vacuum pressure. 'Ahh', I hear you saying, 'What about the emergency release in the boot?' Sadly, the only key we have with the vehicle at this stage is the round headed valet key – which does not open the boot lid, glove box or centre cubby. So to reiterate, I have an immobile 500SE, with no fuel, a locked fuel filler cap and no means of opening it. At this stage, there is only one thing to do. Call my mate Leigh Holbrook...



Rob Blair Contributor

1991 Mercedes 190E 2.0

Mileage: 81624

First instalment

Commuter Love

A 190E makes the perfect commuter car for London and north Surrey traffic.

I'd like to introduce you to my daily driver. This car found its way into my possession almost by accident. A very good friend of mine bought it, intending to tidy it up a bit, before sending it to a new enthusiast home. However, once he had collected it and driven it to Wales and back, he decided it was a keeper. There was a snag, though. Storage at his place is at a premium, owing to a couple of project cars and his daily driver W210 E430.

It just so happened that, as he was looking for storage, I was looking for something frugal yet interesting to run as a daily driver. A conversation ensued in which he suggested that if I could keep the 190E at my home, it would be mine to use as I wish for the foreseeable future. A great deal for both of us, so, one sunny Sunday afternoon, I collected it from Orpington and drove it home to Epsom.

So far, I am enjoying it very much indeed. I have always loved the way that Mercedes-Benz products of this era drive. They encourage a relaxed and sedate driving style and dignified progress is the order of the day. The perfect antidote to the modern attitude toward the daily commute, which seems to be all aggression and haste, with no grace. The 190E is, despite its size, a perfect embodiment of this nature. It simply glides along, quietly, smoothly, with that magic emblem sweeping across your view down the bonnet. It just so happens that it feels closer than in the larger models in the range at the time.

It's alarmingly economical too. I was using a Renault 19 1.8 cabrio as a commuter car before the 190, and it's better than the 19 was, despite the



"I've worked out that I'm averaging 32mpg."

bigger engine, more weight and auto box. Having done some sums, I think I'm averaging about 32mpg in rush hour traffic. Needless to say, my old Jag has been relegated to high days

Above: Rob's borrowing his 190E from a collector friend.

and holidays: I'm even using this at weekends.

Things I don't like are few and far between. The front electric windows don't work, the heater makes an unholy racket, the driver's side door cards have warped and, horror of horrors, the clips for the sun visors are broken. This is all small fry and will be attended to in due course, so watch this space. For now, though, I shall be revelling in the beautifully sprung seat, the legendary build quality and the smooth sound of my Blaupunkt radio as I put the 190E to the test as my daily driver. 



Iain Wakefield Contributor



Springtime comes early

No wonder our CLK was riding badly... the rear springs had snapped!

I don't get to drive the CLK all that often, as it's used mainly by Mrs W, my other, or some say better half. But the last time I took it out for a blast with the hood down, there was a worrying clunk coming from the rear every time the car hit a pothole. This was probably due to a recently repaired exhaust bracket letting go again, as a broken rear mount was welded up a couple of months ago. Once the CLK was on the ramp at South Derbyshire based classic friendly Forge Garage (0182 373573), proprietor Tony Blake pointed out the broken exhaust hanger and added fabricating a new bracket to the service.



Although our CLK is just over 12 years old, it's a one previous owner car and has only done 49,000 miles. It's in very good condition for the year, so I wasn't too worried about the MoT test until Tony called me over to look at the front suspension. Both of the coil springs had snapped about six inches from the bottom and they had been broken for some time.

The E Class needed two new front springs at the last service, so knowing it's not a huge job to drop the CLK's MacPherson struts and fit a new pair of springs, I gave Tony the go-ahead to do the work after he completed the MoT test. Unfortunately the test also threw up a worn track rod end and drop link

2005 Mercedes CLK 200 cabriolet

Mileage: 48,916

First instalment

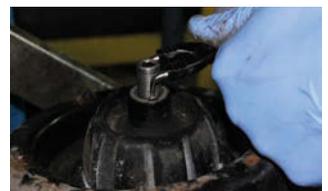
but other than that everything else was fine. With the car now on the wheel free lift on the other side of the workshop, the first job was to remove the road wheels and start by undoing the large bolt securing the top of the drop link to the strut.

"Always use two or more spring compressors."

When tackling the bolts it was obvious the struts had never been off the car, as it took an extra long breaker bar to crack the fixings on the hub. After the plastic bracket for the brake hose, anti-lock and pad wear cables had been removed, the next step was to undo the large nut securing the top of the strut to the inner wing. A rattle gun made short work of this operation and once the strut was off, we could see where the spring had snapped close to the bottom coil. Even though the spring was broken, there's still a huge amount of energy stored in one and removing a coil spring incorrectly will cause a lot of damage.

If doing this job at home, always use two or more spring compressors and carefully tighten each leg in turn. Also watch out the feet don't slip, as a flying spring could probably take you head off as it whizzes across the workshop. Like most professional set ups, Tony uses a foot operated pneumatic spring compressor and locks the strut safely inside a sturdy metal cage while working on one.

To remove the broken spring, the top mount had to be removed from the strut and this is held in place by a threaded collar at the top of the piston. The collar was removed with the aid of a pair of circlip pliers and once it had been fully undone, the pressure was taken off the



strut and the damaged spring consigned to the skip. This proved to be the easy part, as it required a lot of juggling with different fittings on the press to compress the new spring far enough to allow the threaded portion of the piston to poke through the top mount.

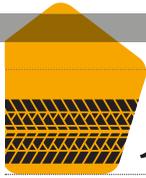
When screwing this collar onto the piston, Tony pointed out that it's vital it goes all the way down the shaft into the mount. If it's not tightened up sufficiently the strut can rattle about when the car goes over any rough ground. Once the new spring had been fitted, the strut was replaced back on the car and Tony moved over to the other side to repeat the operation on

Above: Refitting is the reverse of removal... but nowhere near as easy!

the broken offside road spring.

With the new springs and steering components fitted, the next job was to get on with the service and replace the worn rear brake pads. Although these looked as if they could have the originals, a quick check showed the discs were still within the manufacturer's limits. Although we didn't fit new rear discs this time round, Tony reckoned they would definitely need replacing when the next set of pads are fitted.

Now the CLK's got a fresh ticket, the E Class will be coming up for a service soon, so let's hope Tony doesn't find anything major when he gets the car up in the air – but more about that next time. 



Stretching the collection

John's 250 Limousine has a diplomatic past

I purchased my Mercedes 250 Lang two years ago. It was used for most of its life by the Nigerian High Commission in London, allegedly followed by a Range Rover when in use. I discovered the car in a 1920s mews garage, where it had always lived, being used infrequently in recent years by the Embassy. The people responsible for its care had been asked to dispose of it on behalf of the Embassy – I can only assume they tired of owning a car which was used so rarely that it drained three batteries per year!

It is a factory-built limousine with extensive rear legroom, owing to the extended wheelbase, or alternatively an additional row of seats can be deployed in the rear, should they be required. This row of seats can be easily folded away when not in use. The Lang belies its age by the way it performs on the road. It is composed and refined in such a way that one would not expect of a 1970s vehicle, with a silky smooth 2.5 litre straight-six engine and an automatic gearbox with almost imperceptible gear changes. I often have to remind myself this is a car which is nearly 40-years-old when driving.

Although I own many classic cars ranging from a Rolls-Royce Silver Spirit to a Leyland Princess, the W123 limousine conveys an air of solidity impossible to find in my other classics and feels so well engineered, it could last indefinitely. It's my only Mercedes at the moment, but it certainly won't be the only one I ever own. The interior displays no visible wear anywhere on the carpets, seats, dashboard



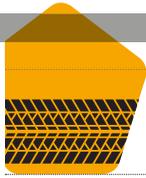
"It's my only Mercedes at the moment, but it certainly won't be the only one I ever own."

Above: Even now, W123 limousines look the part.

or switchgear and benefits from the famously tough "MB Tex" seat covering, renowned for being more tough than rhinoceros skin. After nearly 40 years and over 100,000 miles, they are still in as-new condition – something that you'd never find in any other marque.

The overall impression suggests a Mercedes that was built to be the best it could be. To me it's an example of Mercedes over-engineering at its best. Owing to its size, it turns a lot of heads on the road, too!





Graham Roper

1997 Mercedes C200 Classic.

First Class

Graham's first Mercedes makes the perfect family classic.

This is the W202 C200 Classic Auto that I had the pleasure of owning for around 12 months.

I purchased the car on a whim after a period of poor health back in December of 2016.

This car was ultra low mileage of around 59k and had traceable history of just 3 owners back to when new.

While in my ownership this car wanted for nothing mechanically, it's simplicity in mechanical design was one of the very things that prompted me to purchase the vehicle in the first instance.

Being the C200 it was powered by the ever reliable M111 2.0 16 valve engine. This engine is actually fairly well suited to the car and is all round a good choice. I did find it a little underpowered at times, however, if driven frugally it will achieve above 600 miles on a single tank of fuel (around 45 mpg).

This car saw me many thousands of extremely reliable miles traveling around the country. Surprisingly for a 20 year old car used every single day, I never once got stranded through mechanical breakdowns.

Parts availability is excellent even through the Mercedes-Benz dealer network. Also main dealer prices for W202 parts is relatively competitive.

I would like to say that this car was utterly flawless in every way. However the largest bug bear I encountered was corrosion. Front wings, door bottoms and the lower sections of the rear inner wheel arches were the most notable issues. The spring perches up front are also worth checking out.

As a Classic trim level this car was well equipped by the first owner.



"In my opinion the W202 makes a great daily drive."

Above: Classic may be base spec but Graham's car is well equipped.

This particular car had a 5 speed automatic transmission, cruise control, electric glass sunroof (with auto close on the key), central locking, Air-conditioning and electric door mirrors. A very nice specification to live with daily.

In my opinion the W202 makes a great daily drive in whatever engine or trim specification that you choose. I can only see that the value of these cars are going to increase as the best, low mileage examples become harder to source.

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Jack O'Brien Club Editor

Club News

Our Club Editor brings you the latest from the Mercedes-Benz Club

2 017 has been a positive year for the Mercedes Benz club, and owners have been able to enjoy a wide range of events for all models. Last year marked a couple of important anniversaries for Mercedes, 50 years of AMG, and 35 years of W201 – the first compact Mercedes Benz saloon.

50 years of AMG was well celebrated in 2017, with the clubs AMG day at Brooklands on 4th June. As one of the many events I attended as a club member over the course of the year I thought this was one of the best. AMG owners were able to drive their cars on the track at MB World, as well as access to the S Class lounge and receive presentations by staff at Mercedes Benz world. Red McKinnon is to be thanked for this excellent event; however he tells me it is unlikely that

"It is unlikely that there will be another AMG day next year."

there will be another AMG day next year and that it was only justified due to the anniversary – let's hope for one in 2027!

Other notable events of the year, were the clubs annual trip to Essen Techno Classica in April, "S Fest" on 30th July, W124 Day on 27th August and Coupe Day at RAF Cosford on September 17th. It is fair to say that the club has hosted a good amount of national events over the last 12 months, but some regular

Below: A row of W140 Coupes resplendent at a South Yorkshire Show.

features have been missing. The W123, which had its 40th Birthday celebrated in 2016 with an excellent W123 day at Gaydon had to make way. It was also made apparent that the club do not deem W201 to have the interest necessary to warrant a show of its own. In my view, it would be productive for the club to take note of the successes of "S Fest", and hold an E Class and C Class day. One could argue that /8 and W123 are not strictly speaking E Class models, but clearly pre date the lineage – same for W201, which is the clear start of the Compact line of Mercedes Saloons.

A highlight of the clubs year, as always, was its excellent stand at the NEC Classic Car Show in November. It is really clear that a massive effort is made by everyone that contributes to make the clubs stand without doubt one of the best at the show.





Both chrome and plastic bumper models were very well represented this year. The highlights for me were Andrew Lane's glorious W123 AMG 'Red Pig' recreation; in to which Martyn Morocco and his team have shoe horned an M117 V8, and Derek Tucker's simply superb W201 190E 2.6 Sportline. Derek's car deserves a show in its own right, while I may be biased to the model, the level of detail and preparation he has gone to with this car is exceptional – I always look forward to seeing that car.

The club held its AGM in Milton Keynes on the 2nd December, which was by all reports an excellent event. The membership was well

"I would say joining the club is worthwhile for most owners."

Above Right: AMGs at Brooklands including Jacob Wilson's C63 507 Edition.

represented by both familiar faces, and new, and awards were given for "Club Person of the Year", as well as other awards for notable achievement.

From an enthusiast point of view it is reassuring that we have such a large and well established owners club, with a dedicated team keeping it running. I would say joining the club is worthwhile for most owners, for the insurance benefits, discount on parts and access to EPC to say the least, but as with most things in life – the more you put in, the more you get out. So to all latent members, I would urge you to make the most in 2018.

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Classic Touring

BRITAIN By Benz: *Pt 1.*

In the first of our guides to touring the country by Mercedes,
we visit the uppermost tip of the Peak District.



Words and pictures: Sam Skelton

Part of the appeal of running a nice car is taking it touring – taking in areas of the country you might not previous have considered. This series is only a gateway – and you needn't follow our routes to the letter should you have more pressing engagements or wish to visit other attractions. But we at Mercedes Driver love driving our cars, and hopefully we can inspire you to do the same with yours.

We're visiting the northern tip of the Peak District, taking in some beautiful roads, the opportunity for a nice walk, and visits to sites of note for fans of British comedy. Our starting point is the Flouch Roundabout at the junction of the A616 and A628 near Penistone, accessible from junction 36 of the M1 by following the Stocksbridge Bypass.

Head west toward Manchester on the A628; the Woodhead Pass. This is one of two primary routes connecting Sheffield to Manchester; the other being the infamous Snake Pass. On your left will be the Dog and Partridge Hotel – an Elizabethan country in that



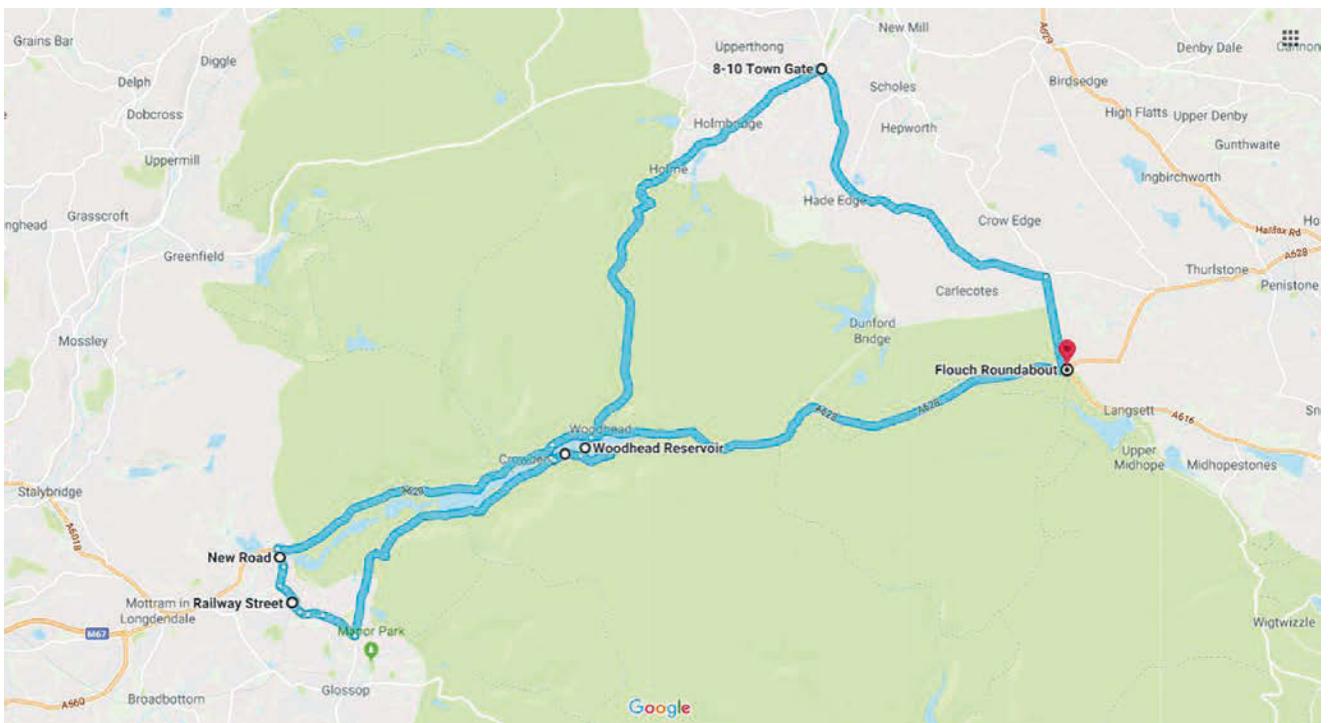
"This reservoir was the victim of an attempted bombing by suffragists."

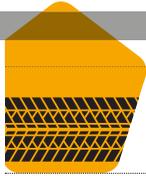
makes a pleasant place for lunch or to stay while in the area. Standard rooms cost from £60 for a single or £70 for a double, including either a Continental or cooked breakfast.

Head west and into the Peak District, passing the Upper Windleden Reservoir as you approach the turning for Dunford Bridge. This reservoir was the victim of an attempted bombing during campaigns by suffragist movements in 1914 – a time during which floodings were used as a terrorist tactic. It is connected by valve to a smaller reservoir, and its role is to keep the smaller reservoir full. Explosives were found at the site of the valve – had they been detonated, the effect would have been to overflow and burst the banks of the lower reservoir, flooding the whole of the valley around Dunford Bridge. The fuse had been a wax taper, which extinguished before detonation.

Onwards, through what is arguably the most beautiful x







Classic Touring

section of the Woodhead Pass between Dunford Bridge and Woodhead. While this is undoubtedly a major road and dangerous in winter, it is one of the most beautiful roads in the country – deep valleys and overhanging trees lead into picturesque reservoir vies. And it's at the nicest of these that we make our next stop. Turn left immediately after circumnavigating the Woodhead Reservoir, onto the B6105 – as you ascend, there will be a car park on the left. The Woodhead Reservoir forms part of the Longdendale Trail; a 6.5 mile trail suitable for cycling or walking. It passes five reservoirs on its route from Woodhead to Hadfield, and forms part of the Transpennine Trail. The route

"Hadfield was immortalised by The League of Gentlemen."

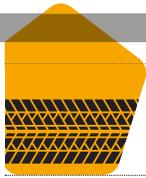
is also suitable for fans of nature and birdwatching, with several species visible at points along the route.

Our next destination is at the other end of the trail, but for this we shall rejoin the B6105 and continue to head west. Hadfield is ostensibly a small Derbyshire town much like many

Below: In a local town for local people.

others – but it was immortalised in 1999 when a team of comic writers immortalised it as the home of their band of dark and twisted characters. The League of Gentlemen may have been set in Royston Vasey, named after Roy Chubby Brown, but the location chosen to represent Royston Vasey was Hadfield. The iconic opening shot of Royston Vasey High Street was Station Road, filmed from the corner with Railway Street. At the risk of sounding like Herr Flick and his pink pamphlets, activities here could include walking through Royston Vasey – but don't get your hopes up; the butchers shop assured us that the special stuff is no longer available. »





Classic Touring

Appropriately enough, we leave “Royston Vasey” via New Road (and no, we’re not making this up) – and once we reach the T junction in Tintwistle, a right turn puts us back onto the Woodhead Pass heading back toward the Woodhead Reservoir from the west. Head north on the A6024, crossing via the villages of Holme and Holmbridge. Our destination is the small town of Holmfirth.

Holmfirth is better known to millions as the unnamed town from last of the Summer Wine, and it is a town which certainly plays on the association. Not only is it possible to enjoy a cup of tea in Sid and Ivy’s café, but to wander the streets joyously and aimlessly in the style of Clegg, Foggy and Compo. Compo’s home, set back from Huddersfield Road in the centre of Holmfirth, is



Below: Outside Sid’s Café, Holmfirth.

now the Summer Wine Experience; a museum dedicated to the series. Above sits a tea room too; dubbed The Wrinkled Stocking as a nod to the programme’s beloved battleaxe Nora Batty. You can even do what Compo longed to do, and spend a night in Nora Batty’s home should you choose. It is now a cottage for hire for holidays; rates start at £300 per week, though shorter stay options are available.

Passing the back of Sid’s Café and

heading up the B6106 toward Longley and Hade Edge, the route ascends once more, the gradients reminding you why the Peak District earned its name. Follow through Longley and Hade Edge, and the road will end in a T-junction with the A616. Turn right, and you will find yourself back at the Flouch Roundabout.

There is no need to follow our direction, nor to begin and end where we suggest – this is a round route, and can be tailored easily to suit your own needs. We toured in December, and while the area is known for road closures in adverse weather the conditions were fine – this is a suitable route to explore at all times of the year. There are several more driving roads in the area, and villages to explore – book a long weekend, and use this as the start of your adventure. 





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