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The 35th anniversary of Mercedes' first small sports saloon marks the beginning of a line which can be traced to today's AMG C-classes. And yet outside of Mercedes circles the 190 2.3-16 seems to have been largely forgotten: overshadowed by other 1980s greats such as the BMW M3 and the Audi Quattro. It's not so long ago that a fair 'Cosworth Merc' could be bought for under £5000, and it's a sign of growing awareness that the very best can command in excess of £20,000 today. Jack O'Brien's known their worth for some time, and documents the history of the model from page 20.

Another oft-overlooked model is the 220S, the upmarket 'Ponton' and the car which spoke of a European middle class better than any other. With few rivals in its homeland and only a slightly wider choice across Europe, this is arguably the model which assured Mercedes as the brand for the comfortable middle classes. Andrew Roberts tells its story from page 30.

We've also brought you the best from the markets, a tour that's perfect for a summer getaway, and all that's exciting from the club scene this month. But now the sun's out and more of you are enjoying your classic Mercedes, we'd love to hear from you about your own projects, prides and joys. Get in touch, and tell us what makes you smile.



Sam Skelton Editor



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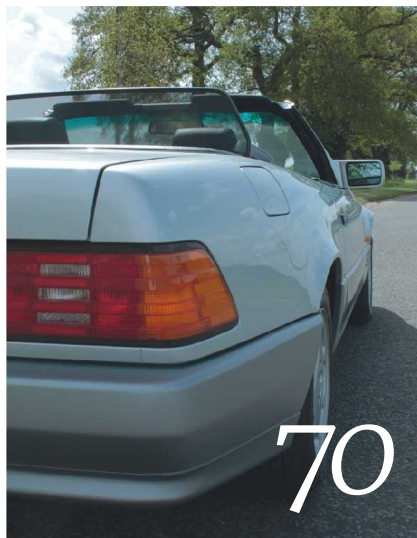
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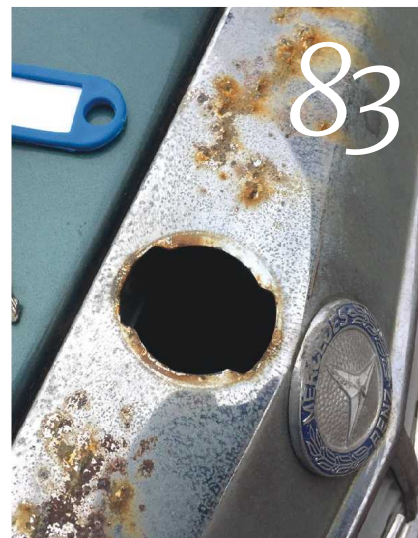
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1996 Mercedes-Benz SL500 £29,750


Green Black with Designo Two Tone mushroom interior. 29k miles, ex-demo with just two former keepers. Exceptional spec – this car had everything you could desire ticked as an option when new including a panoramic glass roof. A stunning example that wants for nothing and this is reflected in its condition.

Demand for good quality classic Mercedes-Benz SL's remain high. We are *always* looking to purchase more low mileage vehicles to replenish our stock.

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» NEWS

Mercedes-Benz Classic Center celebrates 25th anniversary

Europe's most significant manufacturer-backed classic vehicle support centre is celebrating its 25th anniversary

The Mercedes-Benz Classic Center opened in 1993 in Fellbach, near Stuttgart, as the Oldtimer Center, with a joint brief to preserve the company's own fleet of historic vehicles and also develop a wide range of services to keep older models on the road.

Today, Mercedes-Benz has an unrivalled supply of parts and expertise and is regarded as one of the brands that truly cares about its heritage and historic vehicles in general. Indeed, such was the popularity of the Center's original concept that a second one opened in 2006 in Irvine, California, to support classic Mercedes owners and enthusiasts in the USA.

The Center's main areas of activity include a comprehensive range of replacement parts and highly authentic works restorations of classic vehicles. The Center carries out such restorations on behalf of private customers and for the vehicle trading arm of Mercedes-Benz Classic, ALL-TIME STARS.

In addition, the experts at the Classic Center take care of the 1,000-plus vehicles in the company's own collection, 160 of which are on display in the Mercedes-Benz Museum.

Each year they also accompany press events with the collection's vehicles, as well as around 20 outstanding events in the international classics calendar. At major events such as the "1000 Miglia" or the Goodwood Festival of Speed, for example, the experts look after the historic



vehicles, whether series production or racing cars, with a mobile workshop.

Since 2015, owners of classic vehicles bearing the Mercedes star have also benefited from the specialist "ClassicPartner" network, which receives advice and practical support from the Classic Center, and is provided with know-how by Fellbach.

Close cooperation between the Classic Center and the official

brand clubs also ensures a good partnership - at present there are 80 recognised Mercedes-Benz clubs worldwide with more than 100,000 members, all who get preferential treatment and discounts on genuine parts and services.

As well as ensuring parts supply and authenticity, the Classic Center also houses the company's vast archive of historic technical, promotional and marketing materials.

NEWS



Binz files for insolvency.

One of the names most synonymous with Mercedes-Benz conversions has filed for insolvency.

Binz GmbH & Co is best known for its ambulance conversions based on Mercedes estate cars, but has also created military vehicles, hearses and funeral limousines, alongside coachbuilt commissions.

The company, which has its headquarters in Lorch, 50km north-east



of Stuttgart, placed the filing on June 5 at Ulm district court, but the company will continue trading while insolvency proceedings are underway and a buyer is sought. All current build contracts, including a substantial order for German military ambulances, will be honoured.

It isn't the first time the company has faced financial troubles. In 2012, it was acquired while under administration by the Thai-based specialist conversion company RMA Group, which develops ambulance and field conversions for Ford and Nissan, among others.

The future for the company and its 80 employees is now uncertain after 82 years of uninterrupted production.

The convertor was established in 1936 by Michael Binz, initially to build fire trucks and box bodies, but the company's heyday came in the 1960s and 1970s with its bespoke rear end conversions of the W110 Ponton, W115 Fintail and W123 models.

It built the bodies for all Atlas commercial vehicles, while it also experimented with its own motor scooter in 1956.

Among its more recent commissions were a fleet of A-Class-based golf buggies for an Arabian royal family and the Smart Crossblade concept.

Unrestored SL achieves £674,000 at auction

A classic Mercedes-Benz SL Roadster that had been part of a private collection for almost 50 years achieved a sale price of US\$895,000 (£674,000) at a recent Bonhams auction, which took place at the Greenwich Concours d'Elegance in Connecticut, USA.

The car was built in July 1959 and was originally supplied to a dealer in Michigan, covering 12,000 miles in its first year of ownership.

By 1961, it had covered 21,000 miles and was sold to a new owner in Colorado, before moving to its next owner's care in Nashville,



Tennessee, in 1969, by which time it had covered 48,000 miles.

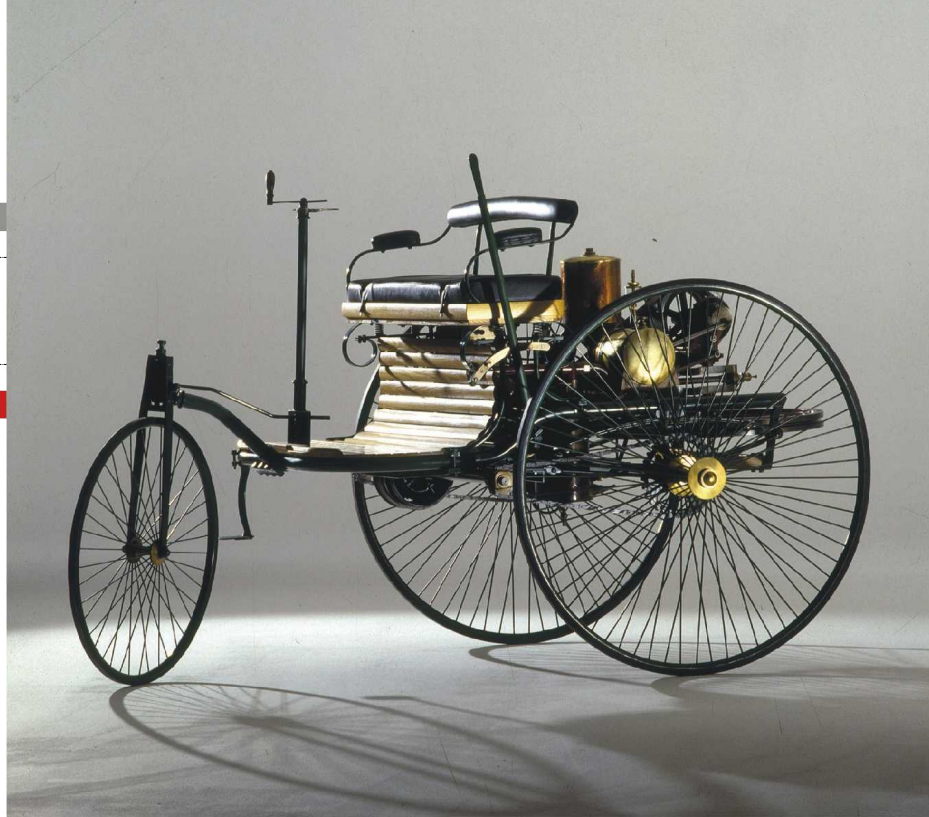
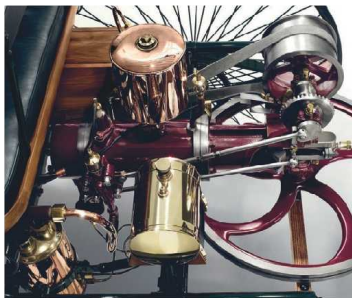
The unrestored SL, in white with black leather, has since been owned by two cousins – the most recent (a prominent celebrity

dentist) was a student at the time his older cousin bought the car, and since acquiring it in 1970 he has used it irregularly, mostly for high profile classic events.

It has now covered a documented 92,500 miles and has never been painted. The car was sold with a matching hardtop, along with all of its original books—including the owner's manual, service book, sales brochure, Becker radio instruction book and even a map of Germany.

Details of the new owner are unclear, though it's believed that the SL could now be on its way back to Europe.

» NEWS



Mercedes Patent Motorwagen

Mercedes to sell replica of original Benz Patent-Motorwagen

Mercedes-Benz's own heritage division is selling a handmade replica of the vehicle widely regarded as the world's first motor car.

The full-scale recreation of the 1886 Benz Patent-Motorwagen was manufactured in 2002 as part of a limited run, and was an authentic replica of the original 'Horseless Carriage' – the first car in the world to feature an internal combustion engine.

The engine was the work of Gottlieb Daimler and the car itself of Karl Benz, thus creating the first ever Daimler-Benz collaboration.

In 2001 to 2002, Mercedes Classic Center was involved in a run of limited recreations, which were primarily aimed at museums and education centres, and it's one of these that the Center itself is currently selling, having recently acquired it for inspection and restoration.

The car is fully functional, with a top speed of 10mph from its single-

Above: Replica Motorwagens will be available from Mercedes.

cylinder engine. It doesn't have much in the way of standard equipment, though it does come with standard leather seats!

If you're interested in buying your own piece of semi-authentic motoring history, complete with certificate from Mercedes Classic Center explaining its relevance, then it's a case of price-on-application. To find out more, you can view the car online here: https://www.mercedes-benz.com/en/ats_vehicle/benz-patent-motorwagen-replika-2/

BRABUS reveals its first ever pick-up

Iconic Mercedes tuning firm, BRABUS, has made its first step into the performance pick-up truck market with a modified version of the new X-Class.

The souped-up truck, based on the X250d model, features distinctive black paintwork, 20-inch 'BRABUS Monoblock' alloy wheels and a performance upgrade.

On the outside, A BRABUS logo centrally positioned in front of the radiator grille is matched by a distinctive mesh infill, while the front undertray has a BRABUS logos recessed into the moulding. The truck also gets integrated LED side markers and four distinctive tailpipes.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature is



the BRABUS light block, though, which features 12 separate LEDs that spread light across the road when the main lights are on full-beam.

The BRABUS D4PowerXtra performance upgrade bumps the output of the 2.3-litre turbodiesel up by 20bhp to 208bhp and the torque by 60Nm to 511Nm.

BRABUS options for the interior include stainless scuff plates and aluminum accessories such as the pedals and footrest, but the highlight is an exclusive BRABUS fine leather interior in any desired colour and a huge number of different upholstery designs.

The company says it is also working on a bespoke BRABUS version of the range-topping X350d, which will be revealed before the end of the year.

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» NEWS

In Brief

Mercedes-Benz reported its strongest ever quarter in terms of global sales in the period April to June 2018. It sold 590,000 new vehicles across the world, bolstered by the strong performance of new models such as the S-Class pick-up and new Sprinter van.



The next generation of EQ electric

concept car is set to be revealed at the 2018 Pebble Beach Concours in August, with Mercedes revealing a teaser image of how it will look. The EQ Silver Arrow will recall the styling and imagery of the famous Mille Miglia cars of the 1950s in a juxtaposition of traditional and ultra-modern, says the company.

Thousands of drivers could be risking fines of up to £1,000 following confusion around MoT exemption rules. While vehicles over 40 years old are now allowed to be driven test-free, the owner has to apply for an MoT exemption via the DVLA. Many drivers are unaware of this, leading to several vehicles being driven on the road with no valid MoT. The DVLA has warned motorists that they need to fill out an exemption certificate from dvla.gov.uk before driving their car without a test.



All aboard the BRABUS boat

A Finnish boat builder has teamed up with Mercedes tuning specialists BRABUS to create one of the world's most exclusive boats – the perfect accessory for the Mercedes driver who has everything...

The Shadow 800, also known as the BRABUS 'One of Twenty' to denote the highly limited build run of just 20 vessels, is built as a smaller boat to complement a larger yacht, and will be sold to exclusive customers only – two in the USA, six in Europe, six in the Asia-Pacific region, two in Hong Kong and four in the UAE.

Priced at a cool US\$495,000, the 36-foot boat is assembled by Finland-based Axopar and comes with a supercharged Mercury Verado outboard engine capable of a top speed of 50 knots.

The look of the boat is unmistakable BRABUS, with box-

sectioned red leather trim, carbon fibre details and a distinctive gloss black paint finish. Only 20 examples of the Shadow 800 will be built, all by hand, and all buyers will receive a special Garmin marine wristwatch to go with the boat.

The plan is that the Shadow 800 wouldn't remain a curiosity, but that the two companies have formed such a "long-term relationship," that there will be more of its kind to follow.

Or as Axopar puts it: "Based upon the same underwater lines and versatile deck layout as the offshore capable Axopar 37 Sun Top, this is so much more than just a mere styling exercise. This is the start of a long-term relationship between Axopar Boats and Brabus, the objective for which is to re-master and create an entirely new genre of world class hyper-boats in different size categories."

We await the BRABUS superyacht with interest!

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190E 1.8 litre Saloon, 1992J, one owner from new, 4-speed auto, 28,000 miles, fmbsh, signal red grey check cloth, sunroof, ABS, centre armrest, front electric windows, front seat nets. Absolutely in showroom condition ! **£9,950.**



500 SE, 1991J, 4-speed auto, 67,000 miles, fmbsh, astral silver metallic, navy leather, aircon, cruise, electric sunroof, electric steering column, electric heated memory seats, otg, headlamp wash/wipe, illuminated vanity mirrors, Blaupunkt radio/cassette. One of the best examples for sale. **£14,950.**



E55 AMG (210-series), 2000X, 5-speed auto/tiptronic, 73,000 miles, fmbsh, brilliant silver metallic, dual tone leather black & ivory leather, climate control, cruise, electric steering column, electric heated orthopaedic memory seats, Command radio/single CD, SatNav/CD Changer/hands free telephone, anti-dazzle rear view mirror, headlamp washers, 18" AMG 5 spoke single rim alloys, AMG bodystyling, front & side airbags, front & rear parking sensors, birdseye wood veneer etc. A fabulous machine..... **£12,950.**



300 SL, 1988E, 4-speed auto, 4 owners, 80,000 miles, fmbsh, diamond blue metallic, navy cloth, dark blue soft top, hard top, factory aircon, cruise, rear seats, driver's airbag, wind deflector, illuminated vanity mirrors. A stunning example. **£34,950.**



300 SL, 1989F, 4-speed auto, 61,000 miles, fmbsh, astral silver metallic, mushroom leather, black soft top, factory fitted hard top, rear seats, illuminated vanity mirrors, Becker Mexico radio/cassette. Last owner 16 years. Beautiful colour combination. **£39,950.**



300 SL, 1989G, 3 owners, 4-speed auto, 109,000 miles, fmbsh, astral silver, navy sports check cloth, navy soft top, factory fitted hard top, cruise, rear seats, Blaupunkt radio/cassette, headlamp wash/wipe, illuminated vanity mirrors. A fine example. **£29,950.**



190E 1.8 litre LE, 1993K, 3 owners, 4 speed auto, 53,000 miles, fmbsh, brilliant silver, black check cloth, electric sunroof, driver's airbag. Large history file with original LE certificate. **£7,950.**



SL 500, 2003/03, 2 owners, 5-speed auto/tiptronic, 29,000 miles, fmbsh, brilliant silver metallic, red leather, electric retractable roof, climate, cruise, electric steering column, electric heated memory seats with lumbar support both sides, ESP, Comand with single CD/radio/SatNav/mobile hands free and 10 CD changer, headlamp washers, wind deflector, 18" AMG alloys. **£14,950.**



E320 Coupe, 1996N, 3 owners, 5-speed auto, 63,000 miles, fmbsh, ruby red metallic, mushroom leather, factory air conditioning, cruise, electric sunroof, headlamp wash/wipe, otg, infrared locking. Beautiful original car. **£13,950.**



300 SL 24-valve, 1992J, 4-speed auto, 30,000 miles, fmbsh, smoke silver metallic, navy leather, electric navy soft top, factory fitted hard top, cruise control, electric seats, twin airbags, rear seats, wind deflector, infrared locking Blaupunkt radio/single CD. A very low mileage SL in show condition..... **£14,950.**



500 SEC, 1988E, 4-speed auto, 60,000 miles, fmbsh & just serviced, smoke silver metallic, navy leather, factory climate control, cruise, electric seats with driver's memory, electric sunroof, headlamp wash/wipe. Gorgeous original car. **£17,950.**



300 SL, 1987E, 4-speed auto, 91,000 miles, fmbsh, smoke silver metallic, mushroom leather, dark brown soft top, factory fitted hard top, rear seats. A lovely original example. Last lady owner 14 years. **£29,950.**

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Letters

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Simplicity is a virtue

I recently attended the Bromley Pageant of Motoring and saw the current C43 AMG on display alongside a white 190E. As a lifelong Mercedes enthusiast (I currently drive a C350e and we also have a B-Class and a classic SL) the thing that struck me most was how much Mercedes-Benz interiors have changed in recent years.

Up until the 2000s, the cabin of any Mercedes was instantly familiar – one column stalk for everything, a large, clear font for the instruments and a completely clutter-free driving environment. Simple, but really effective. Even our SL, a luxury grand tourer in its day, feels a little sparse in the cockpit.

The 190E defines that – there was nothing in the cabin except the

essentials, all made out of materials that looked pretty much unbreakable.

The C43 on the other hand (like my C350e) looks like a branch of Dixons! Electronic gadgets aplenty and a tiny button in lieu of a gear selector. I'm sure the current C43 AMG is a truly fabulous thing to drive once you've worked out how to make it go, but for me the pleasure is in the driving, not the vast number of buttons, apps and touchscreen whatnots that are there to detract from the experience.

I wonder if this is really progress, as of the two cars, it was the 190E that I most wanted to drive home!

David Jones, Tunbridge Wells

Hidden secret

I'd like to draw your attention to one of the most overlooked modern

Above: C230 Kompressor is a well kept secret

classic Mercedes in my opinion. I own a W202 C230 Kompressor Sport automatic, with the AMG bodykit and the individual sports seats in the back.

I wanted to try and find an AMG, but for the money I had to spend I couldn't find anything worth having. Instead I have an excellent sports saloon with brilliant balance, more than enough poke for most situations, something that looks fantastic, and it's cost me less than a third of what I might have paid for a nice C36 AMG! I'll never sell it. Well – I might, if I found a really nice manual...

Terry Bevan, Newcastle upon Tyne.

SS – we know just how great the C230K can be – expect to see more on those in Mercedes Driver soon!

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Homologation **HERO**

Our Club Editor tells the story of Mercedes' race-derived special.







Cosworth

Words: Jack O'Brien
Pics: Sam Skelton

The story of the 190E 2.3 and 2.5-16 Cosworth is a fascinating one, one that defined an era of compact performance saloon cars. It's been told a thousand times but nonetheless, it's well worth hearing.

The combined efforts of Mercedes Benz's own development team, during the period of mechanical perfection, and that of Cosworth, saw the birth of the M102.985 2.3 litre, 16v 4-cylinder engine in 1984. Revised Bosch KE fuel injection, high compression and a competition inspired stainless steel exhaust manifold gave the European spec 190E 2.3-16 185bhp at a screaming 7000rpm. With the five speed Getrag dog-leg manual gearbox and at launch, a mechanical limited slip differential, the 2.3-16 could sprint from 0-60 mph in 7.8 seconds and reach a top speed of 143mph.

Other differences that mark a 16v out from a regular 190 include the aero bodykit, which reduced the drag coefficient to 0.32cd - the lowest of any four-door saloon at the time. Furthermore, the steering ratio was tightened, and the car received a smaller 390mm steering

"The 2.3-16 could sprint from 0-60 mph in 7.8 seconds and reach a top speed of 143mph."

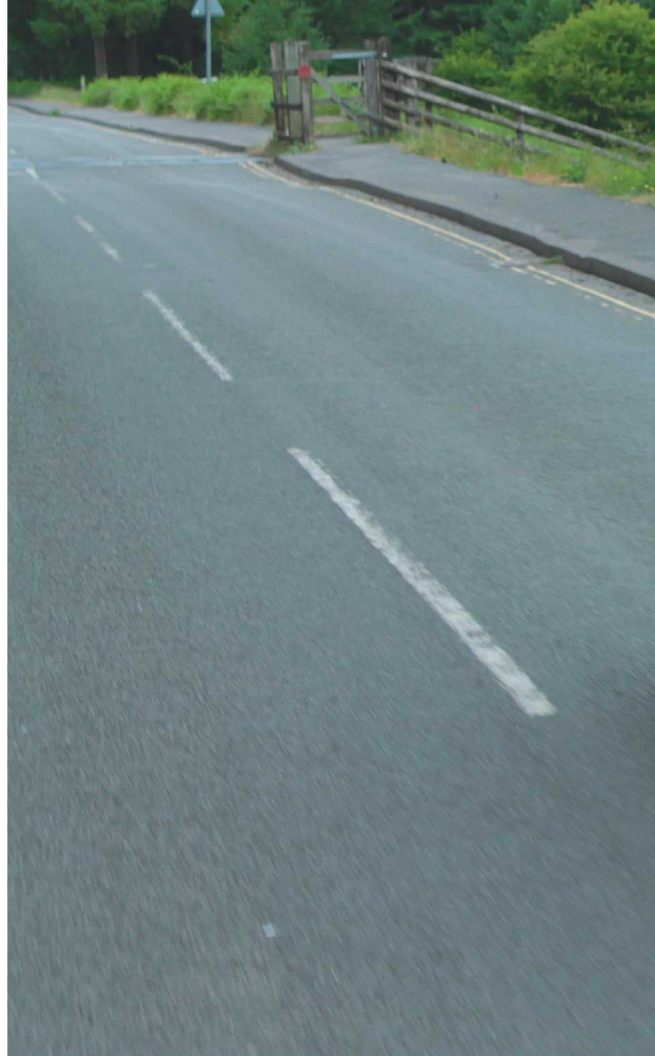
wheel. Interior changes included the bucket front and rear seats, which were trimmed in half leather half 'Sport Design Check' as standard, or as optional full black leather. 16v cars also gained an oil temperature gauge, digital lap timer and voltmeter in the centre console.

They had lowered suspension all round, with stiffer anti-roll bars, uprated dampers and bushing and Self Levelling Rear Suspension. A mechanical Limited Slip Diff was standard equipment and ASD electronically controlled limited slip differential followed in later models. That had the capacity to be up to 100% locking and activated with a 1% speed difference between the driven wheels. At launch, the 2.3-16 was only available in two colours, '199' Blauschwartz (Blue Black), or '702' Rauschsilber (Smoke Silver).

A proven Mercedes-Benz high performance car before it even entered series production, in August 1983 the car underwent high speed endurance testing at the Nardo circuit in Southern Italy. It was driven for over 201 hours at an average speed of 247.9km/h. It broke three world

Below right:

Walnut dash kit is not original equipment







speed records for distance – 25,000km, 25,000 miles and 50,000km, and 12 international class speed records. The remarkable thing about the performance is that the three test cars ran in 40°C heat for nine days at full throttle without a single mechanical malfunction.

As well as setting world records, the 2.3-16s ability to perform at high speed was demonstrated in 1984. To start the Formula 1 season, and to introduce the new shortened Nurburgring, Mercedes Benz lined 20 of their new 2.3-16s up and held a race between Formula 1 drivers. As a technical exercise for the drivers it was superb, it put them all on an even playing field; victory would be due to raw talent rather than any car-based advantage. Most of the drivers didn't take the race particularly seriously, famously having a heavy


**"In the 2.3-16, no one
could match Senna's pace
and he went on to win."**



evening in the bar the night before and not being on top form for race day. Most of the race was a hung-over mess in reality, the only real racing being between the then 2-time world champion Nikki Lauda, and Ayrton Senna – who was to make his F1 debut in 1984. In the 2.3-16, no one could match Senna's pace and he went on to win, showing from an early stage his ability as an absolutely world class racing driver and master of vehicle handling. As a marketing exercise, it was a great move for Mercedes Benz – one of Senna's career defining moments occurred in a 190E.

The 2.3-16 was superseded in 1988, by the much improved 190E 2.5-16. Some would question whether the 2.5 is a "proper Cosworth." However, the cylinder head of 2.5 cars are still stamped Coscast – so they

were produced in the Cosworth foundry, and there are records of development of the cylinder head held by Cosworth. Power was up to 204bhp in pre-cat European specification, and peak torque was up slightly at 235nm, but was available at slightly lower revs; making the 2.5-16 feel more urgent but some say less free revving. The M102s ability to run all the way up to, and beyond, its 7000rpm redline was still present however and the increased flexibility of the larger displacement 2.5 makes it a much more useful power plant when driving hard.

The redeveloped 2.5 engine also had a Duplex timing chain as opposed to the Simplex chain of the earlier 2.3s, so the possibility of snapped timing chains was almost eradicated. Further updates included ASD as standard and the introduction of two more colours: 



Cosworth

'735' Asteralsilber (Astral Silver) and '512' Almandinerot (Almandine Red).

These improvements make the 2.5 the one worth having, it's also much rarer. 19,487 2.3s rolled off the Sindelfingen production line, whereas only 5743 2.5s were built - probably explained because the US and North American markets never got the 2.5. In fact, the US only got the 2.3 in 1986 and 1987, with a catalyst bringing power back to 166bhp and loaded with heavy optional equipment such as power seats and air con, they would

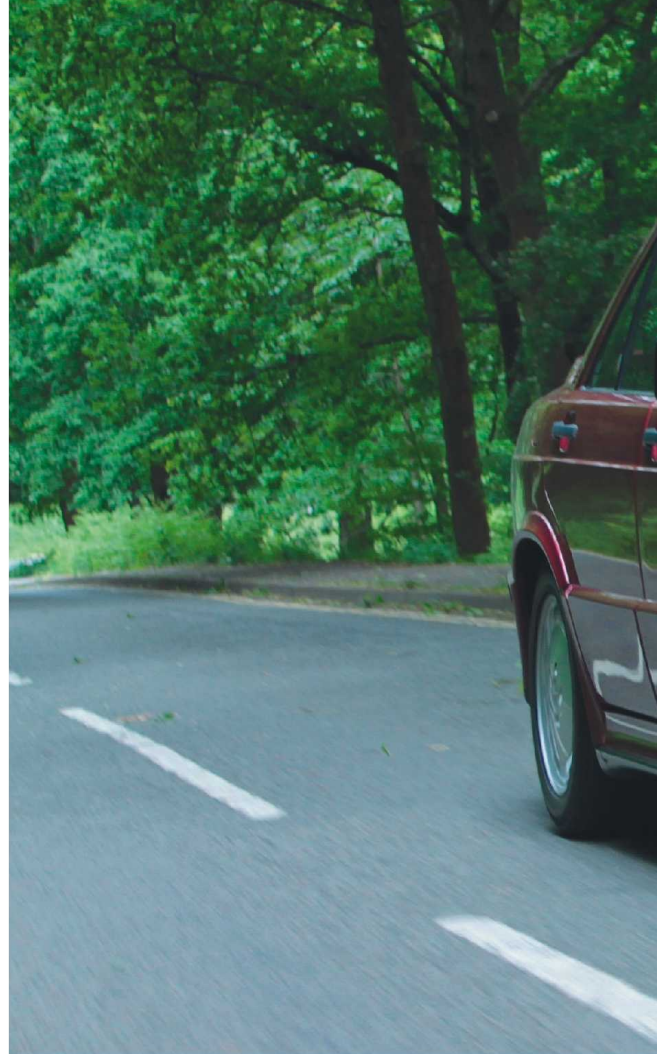
"19,487 2.3s rolled off the Sindelfingen production line, whereas only 5743 2.5s were built."

barely have kept pace with a 2.6.

The launch of the 190E 2.5-16 Evolution in March 1989 saw the first factory backing to motorsport from Mercedes Benz since the 1950s. The car was wider and squatter thanks to a more aggressive body-kit and bigger rear spoiler, as well as 16" forged alloy wheels and SLS on all four corners. Under the bonnet, the general appearance of the engine bay and even the power output of 205bhp was pretty similar to that of the 2.5-16 on which it was based. The engine internals however differed greatly, with a squarer bore and stroke compared to the M102.990, as well as lightened internals and modified, higher lift cams the M102.991 could rev to 7250rpm in road trim, and 502 units were built for homologation purposes.

A year later, following the signing of Klaus Ludwig to the Mercedes team for the 1989 DTM season and winning 5 races in the car's debut year, 502 Evolution II models were produced. They were sold out before the model was unveiled despite a price tag of \$80,000 in 1990. The Evo II used fundamentally the same short stroke 2.5 unit of the Evo I, but with a single row timing chain for further reduced rotational mass, chain driven oil pump, even racier cams and a 10.5:1 compression ratio as well as a larger intake manifold and stainless exhaust. The M102.992 is the highest factory output engine fitted to a W201, with 235bhp and an 7700rpm redline. The Evo models were very successful in the DTM taking 52 victories over their 5 seasons.


Right, enough with the history lesson. It's 2018 and what is a 190 Cosworth actually like 30 years on and in a



world where heavily turbocharged, dual clutch, all-wheel drive 300bhp hatchbacks are the norm?

Let's start with that engine. In the case of the car in the photos, an M102.990 2.5 from 1989 - in its purest breathing; pre-cat form. It's pretty much totally original, low mileage and has been maintained by Mercedes - so should in theory be as close to the real deal as we can get. Turn the key and hear the familiar starter motor spin the high compression 16 valver in to life. It quickly settles to a quiet rhythm with only a very subtle hint of its true intentions from the exhaust note. Compare this to today's AMG cars, which roar in to life with such a surge of revs and fury that might cause small children to drop their ice cream, and it all feels rather underwhelming.

Engage first, through the famously stubborn dog leg gate and you're away. No real revs are required for a smooth take off and the flexibility of the engine low down quickly becomes apparent. Driving steadily to let the fluids warm up and the uninitiated would be forgiven for thinking that this is just any other Sacco taxi: quiet, well made and as straight laced as Jonathan Rees-Mogg's right brogue.

This is one of few to survive with a proper Mercedes exhaust that's in good condition. Most have succumbed to a cheap after-market system or some sort of sporty stainless set up that's at 11 the whole time. It's refined, in fact almost muted, below 3500rpm with a moderate throttle. Floor it though and that changes, the engine note hardens as the revs build and above 5000rpm you get a symphony of induction noise and the classic twin cam bellow. It's a hard, bassy sound that only a 4 cylinder can make, snorty rewarding with every last revolution 





"I liked this 2.5 so much
that I bought it."

right up to the ignition cut. Unlike any other Mercedes engine of the era, it wants to be thrashed and is never as happy as it is in the upper regions of its rev range.

A masterclass as to "why performance cars should be naturally aspirated", it's not even THAT fast. It shifts, a 1260kg car with 204bhp is going to, but a new Volkswagen Polo GTI would more than likely humiliate it... Although that's not relevant. What is relevant is the nature of the power delivery, the induction noise, the glorious revving nature of a highly cammed, over-square 4 pot and the way this car puts its power to the road through that superb hydraulic locking differential. Smashing from second to third gear via a short straight throw is highly addictive and at no point does this car leave you wanting more.

Come to your first corner, still slightly shocked at how capable a near 30-year-old car feels at 7000, brake and execute a perfect heel-toe down to third and feel as the car starts to lean over on its suspension. Regular W201s have surprising cornering grip in spite of the body roll, but with its rear self-levelling and thicker anti-roll bars this is much better and never catches you by surprise.

It's all about weight transfer with suspension like this, and never being afraid to use a trailing throttle to send some weight forward and then apply power on corner exit to keep the back end glued to the road. Respectable progress can be made, and a keen driver would still be able to surprise much newer and "faster" cars. Then you have the looks, the perfectly proportioned wedge shapes, the aero bodykit and meaty 7J 15-hole alloy wheels. This



car screams 80s at the top of its voice and I love it. I'm also an absolute sucker for the half cloth, half leather sports seats. You can obviously have full leather, but that's so boring and obvious, and cold in winter.

It's just as capable as a regular W201, it only has 4 seats, but 3 adults can't really fit on the standard bench anyway; so that's no detriment. It has a big 70 litre fuel tank, will do over 35mpg on a motorway cruise and has a boot that will take all your shopping. You could quite easily live with one every day and not be worn out. For the way this car handles, the ride is incredible. Providing the self-levelling suspension is in working order it will be more comfortable than a new C Class on 18" wheels.

We've ascertained that the 190E 2.5-16 is a highly competent, rewarding and practical sports saloon for the

keen driver, with a fabulous racing history and interesting story, and we all want one. Realistically, in today's market, you need at least £15k to buy a half decent one. That's a lot of money for a 30-year-old 4-cylinder Merc saloon with questionable door cards. An R107, C126, W108, the very best 280CE W123, or even a superb W211 E55 AMG could be had for that kind of money – with change, so is the 190E worth it?

With only 45 2.3-16 manuals and 75 manual 2.5s in the UK though, the days to buy one before everyone remembers the best kept secret of the 1980s are numbered. Victor Kiam liked the Remington shaver so much that he bought the company. I liked this 2.5 so much that I bought it, and I certainly don't want to exercise the money back guarantee.

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Classic Mercedes - Benz



1981 W126 500SEL Auto - 63K Miles - 1 Owner - FMBSH

Finished in unmarked 480 Manganese (Bronze) metallic with Mushroom leather. An incredibly well preserved early example of what is generally regarded as the best S-Class ever made. Everything, including AC, Climate and cruise still work perfectly. Comes with an extensive MB service history containing 35 main dealer stamps.

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1996 C140 CL500 Coupe - Just 52K Miles - FSH

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£13,995



1985 W123 280CE Auto - Just 89K Miles - FSH

A sublime six cylinder W123 Coupe finished in gleaming 473 Champagne with 054 Palomino fabric interior. Just two previous owners, this is an exceptional example which has been garaged most of its life and comes with a comprehensive service history detailing its charmed 33 year life.

£11,995



1992 W201 190D 2.0 5sp Man.- Just 39K Miles - FSH

In gleaming and pristine 568 Signal red with pristine Oxblood cloth interior. A simply beautiful example that has covered a mere 39,000 miles with FSH. A real one off, and probably one of the best 190 Diesels available, I very much doubt you'll find another like it.

£8995



1995 W140 S500 Auto - 65K Miles - FSH

Finished in 366 Azurite Blue with Cream leather. Very high specification and just 65K miles, with the most amazing service history, which starts with the original bill of sale for £65,768.57. It's said the W140 is probably the most thoroughly engineered car of all time, and this car is certainly testament to that.

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UPFRONT





Middle Class **HERO**

The first truly post war mid range Mercedes?
Andrew Roberts thinks so







Mercedes 220 Ponton

Words:
Andrew Roberts

It is often the case that a truly great car wears its distinction lightly, and this is the case with the Mercedes-Benz 220a/220S/220SE. Today the coupe and cabriolet versions regularly attract stratospheric prices but here we will concentrate on the standard four-door versions as the car that helped to create a new form of executive motoring in Germany of the 1950s.

When the 180 Ponton made its bow in 1953, M-B enthusiasts predicted that it would soon be joined by a more upmarket version as a replacement for the W187. The latter had been launched in 1951 but it was essentially a warmed-over pre-war design and by the middle of the decade the company was in need of a replacement model that better captured the mood of the Wirtschaftswunder economic miracle. The W180 series 220a was launched in March 1954 and while it was not the first new post-war six-cylinder saloon to bear the famous logo, as that honour went to the 300 "Adenauer" in April 1951 it was the first to benefit from unitary construction.

The 220a could immediately be distinguished from the 180 by its elongated bonnet with indicators mounted above the headlamps, as opposed to just ahead of the A-pillars. The cabin was extended by nearly three inches, with the back doors gaining opening quarter lamps but to many devotees of the marque, the real interest lay beneath the slightly formal but still handsome coachwork. The OHC 2195cc engine was based on the unit from the outgoing W187 but had a higher compression ratio and a power output of 85 bhp. At the rear the independent suspension layout benefitted from a new pivot rear swing axle that had been developed at S for the W 196 Formula One racing car.

The fortunate 220a buyer also



"The 220a could immediately be distinguished from the 180 by its elongated bonnet with indicators mounted above the headlamps."

gained a wood veneered dashboard, fog lamps, a cigar lighter and carpet for the rear seat occupants - those sat on the front bench made do with rubber flooring. The extras list included a heater fan, reclining front seats, leather upholstery and fitted luggage and, above all, this was possibly the definitive car for Germany's haute bourgeoisie. It was more subtle in appearance than a Borgward Hansa 2400 and it lacked the air of pseudo-Americanism that was a trademark of the Opel Kapitän. The latter was to become one of the best-selling German cars of the 1950s, but the Mercedes-Benz had a more rarefied image and its main domestic rival was the BMW 502. Munich had introduced their V8 version



Mercedes 220 Ponton

of the "Baroque Angel" in the same month as the 220a and much was made of how its top speed of a shade under 100 mph was superior to the Ponton's 94.5 mph. The 502 was also the eight-cylinder car to be made in Germany since the end of the Second World War but while it was a favourite with sporting motorists and the country's police forces, the Mercedes-Benz appealed to the more low-key driver – the bank director as opposed to the weekend racer.

In the UK, matters were somewhat different as import duties raised the price to £2,123 5s 10d, making a 220a considerably more expensive than a Jaguar Mk. VIIM and over double the cost of a Ford Zephyr-Zodiac. 'Already at first sight, are you thrilled by the graceful and elegant outer appearance of this timeless beautiful car which imparts so vividly how comfortable and fast even great distances can be covered without the slightest feeling of weariness or fatigue?' asked the English language brochure of its doubtlessly enthralled reader. Alas, the sensation of 'lounging in its cosy

"In the UK, matters were somewhat different as import duties made a 220a over double the cost of a Ford Zephyr-Zodiac."

back' was for the few, as the six-cylinder Ponton was the preserve of British captains of industry and denizens of Pinewood and Elstree. Meanwhile a Motor magazine report of the 22nd June 1955 admired the performance – by contrast, the 180 they evaluated in the previous year achieved just under 74 mph – and thought that their test car:

"...has not been designed for superficial appeal, to be discarded

after a relatively short life when motoring fashions change, but rather sets out to provide a long-lasting means of fast personal transportation."

The scribe was also of the view that the 220a offered a 'remarkable' combination of comfort, solidity, economy and high performance even if these positive attributes were 'without contriving any charm of personality'. His (it would have been "his" in 1955) last point is worth further consideration for even at that time, you might read letters from overseas motorists whose expensive British car had charmingly failed to proceed or displayed very distributive personality traits via its rapidly deteriorating bodywork. As with its cheaper counterpart, the big Ponton was a car of integrity, as suited to a business user in Dar-es-Salaam as it was in Frankfurt. As for press-on owners, they almost certainly concurred with the Das Auto, Motor und Sport report which noted the absolute handling safety even at high speeds'.









Mercedes 220 Ponton

Daimler-Benz built 25,937 examples of the 220a saloon before it was replaced by two models in March 1956. The cheaper 219 used the 220a engine but the cabin and the boot of the cheaper Pontons will be described more fully in a future article while the upmarket 220S, boasted twin carburettors as befitting 'a car of stunning beauty' with 'that blissful feeling of utter security'. One cannot help but feel that the art of writing advertising copy has been in marked decline since the late 1950s. There was also the new option of Hydrak clutch, a semi-automatic transmission to make the standard four-on-the-column shift more appealing for town driving and to attract more US customers. In practice, this often proved unreliable and any surviving 220S thus equipped is an extremely rare sight.

1957 marked a further power increase and the last major version of the 220 appeared in October 1958 with the 220SE having a Bosch mechanical fuel injection. This marked the first foray of Daimler-Benz into mass-produced injected cars;

"They set the template for the marque's future successes."

they sternly warned all would be amateur tuners and engineers that 'a subsequent installation cannot be effected'. The system enhanced power output by 18% and although only 1,974 saloons were to leave the factory, they were crucial in maintaining the profile of the Ponton range before the six-cylinder models were replaced by the W111 in August 1959. Praise such as the 220SE was 'so responsive to the accelerator pedal that it is no exaggeration here to talk of it setting new standards – at least as far as any reputable conventional

car is concerned'. (Das Auto, Motor und Sport 1959) would also deter the well-heeled from being distracted by any BMW.

Perhaps the main legacy of the 1955-1959 220 family is that they set the template for the marque's future successes. The motorist who placed an order for a 220S or 220SE in 1958, upgrading to its "Fintail" successor in the following year and, by 1965, to the latest W108 series S-Class. One last quote then from the brochures, as this highly descriptive passage encapsulates the virtues that established the six-cylinder Ponton as an object of desire (and social aspiration) around the world:

It is beautiful because its appearance fulfils the age-old law of aesthetics; it is modern because many of its elements of design are pioneering; it is comfortable because generosity stands godfather to the fashioning of the interior; it is solid because quality serves as a basic axiom at all five of the large Mercedes-Benz AG plants.

Beautifully put.



UPFRONT

Second BITE

25 years on, Sam Skelton outlines the history of the C-class.



"The C-class line began
as a replacement for
the decade-old 190E."





Mercedes C-Class

Words:
Sam
Skelton

The Mercedes C-class is one of Mercedes' most enduring and popular model lines. Originally launched as the W202 to replace the ageing 190E, it is now in its fourth generation. As the original version turns 25, it's an apt moment for Mercedes Driver to chart its history and development from cradle to grave.

Launched in 1993, the C-class line began as a replacement for the decade-old 190E series. It was the last Mercedes saloon line to receive the new naming formula following the S-class and E-class nomenclature of 1992, with a letter denoting each series and a number directly relevant to its engine size. The 190 had been the product of many years' planning, and this new model benefited from almost a decade of research and development to ensure it stayed at the top of its game. Development had begun in October 1986 upon what at the time was called the new 190.

"When launched, the range was the sole Mercedes range to consist of nothing but multivalve engines. There were four levels of trim; Classic, Esprit, Sport, and Elegance."

Design work commenced under Bruno Sacco's guidance in 1987, with two front-running designs emerging in 1988. By the beginning of 1990, Olivier Boulay's design had been chosen, frozen, and development begun. Boulay had previously penned the body of the W140 S-class, and following a stint away from Mercedes returned in 1992 to create the Maybach concept of 1997.

When launched, the range was the sole Mercedes range to consist of nothing but multivalve engines. C-classes were powered by the C180, C200, C220 and C280 petrol engines, plus the C200D, C220D and C250D. Later engine options from 1996 included a 2.3-litre four cylinder derived from the 2.2-litre. This engine was subsequently supercharged, fitted to the C230K as well as the SLK sports car. Certain markets also received a 2.0 supercharged C200K to take advantage of tax laws. Five speed manual gearboxes were standard at launch, with an optional four

Right: Early Elegance, identified by clear indicators and bumper chrome



speed automatic, and a five speed automatic from 1996.

The C230 and C280 were replaced with V6 engines in 1997, the C240 and C280 V6. CDI common-rail diesels were introduced in 1997 too; the C220CDI being followed shortly by a C200CDI derivative. Some later models received a 5 speed automatic.

The C-class emerged into what was a fiercely contested small executive car sector. Chief among its rivals was the E36 BMW 3-series, though the later Audi A4, the Volvo 850 and the SAAB 900 were all strong rivals too. Even prestigious versions of many family and fleet cars were often considered alongside more basic examples of the C-class, giving it a wide scope in the market.

There were four levels of trim; Classic, Esprit, Sport, and Elegance. Classic was the entry level model, with the most basic specification – intended to attract new customers who might not be able to afford a more expensive Mercedes model. The Esprit was targeted at a similar, though more youthful, market – with lower springs, and carbon fibre effect trim in place of any black plastic or wood. Sport added to Esprit with lowered sports suspension, white dials, a smaller steering wheel and bucket seats, and was intended as the most youthful specification option. Many Sports were supplied with an optional twin rear bucket seat option, though this wasn't standard. The Elegance model was the best-equipped as standard, with upgraded cloth trim, a walnut dashboard, colour keyed bumper finishers with chrome trim, black-chrome window surrounds, and electric windows all round. Again, many Elegances were fitted with a high number of extras including air conditioning, alloy wheels and leather seats – if you want a miniature S-class, this is the likeliest candidate. »







Mercedes C-Class

Left: The estate was launched in 1996

An estate model was launched in 1996, with specifications following the saloon models across the range with the exception of the later AMG models. Where the saloon was given development code W202, the estate became S202 in line with Mercedes naming convention. The following year the C-class range was facelifted, with new lights, new alloys and subtly different interior changes. It survived in this form until production ceased.

The C-class was the basis of one of the first of the new breed of in-house AMG models. The 1995 C36AMG was intended to rival the six-cylinder BMW M3, and built upon the C280's start with 1" lower sports suspension, a bodykit, and a hand-built 3.6-litre six cylinder engine which was capable of anywhere between 276 and 287bhp – hand assembled engines not being noted for consistency.

The C36 was followed in 1997 by an even more powerful model. Public reaction to the V8-engined E430 had been encouraging, so Mercedes tasked AMG with the job of fitting the 4.3-litre M117 engine into the C-class. The resultant C43AMG was even more powerful, developing 302bhp and 302lb.ft of torque. The gearbox was an uprated derivative of the 722.6 found in the S1500, and the braking system had been taken from the larger E55AMG.

"The C-class was the basis of one of the first of the new breed of in-house AMG models."



While strictly speaking there was no C-class coupe derived from this chassis, the W202 also begat the CLK-class. Designed as a replacement for the C124 E-class coupe, the CLK retained styling derived from the E-class range but was based on the floorpan and drivetrains of the smaller car. A 1.8 was not available, nor were diesels – but as with the saloon line the engines spanned from 4-cylinder through to a V8 AMG variant.

The W202-series C-class was replaced in 2001 by the W203-series – a newer, softer design following the language of the new W220 S class. Many enthusiasts don't feel that subsequent models had the same level of build quality or the same traditional feel of the W202, and many believe that the W202 is the last of the "old school" Mercedes. 1.62 million saloons had been made, with 221000 estates.





Mercedes C-Class



Buying a W202

The C-class makes an excellent daily driver – or, alternatively, a great modern classic for those seeking an easy way into Mercedes ownership. It's inexpensive to run, with space for the family, it's compact enough to park in car parks, and there are still enough being broken to make ownership a cheap proposition if you're clever. The biggest problem you're likely to encounter with a

C-class is rust – on the wheelarches and front wings in particular, though the sills and the doors should also be checked. Few are allowed to get so bad they develop structural issues, but it's worth checking as much of the underside as you can see. Cosmetically, lacquer peel can be an eyesore but is unlikely to create any more significant issues as long as the paint is intact. Both petrol and diesel engines are solid and long-lasting in service, and

the gearboxes are well-trying and well proven in other models of Mercedes. While it's possible to pay scrap money, we'd want to spend at least £1000 and find the best example we could. We'd look for a C230, a C240, or a C280 V6 if we wanted a petrol, or the excellent C250TD and C220CDi if we were looking for diesels. Most will be automatic, but there is no price premium for a manual.

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£8750.



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Obsidian Black with Black nappa leather, heated seats all round, rear roller blind, privacy glass to rear - a beautiful car with full main dealer service history - my own car for 4 years, just 66,000 miles.
£8,500.



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Modded Mercs

Words: Sam Skelton

Gold!

Much like Spandau Ballet, this Zender-tuned 190 epitomises one of the key colours of its era

We've already looked at the work of Zender on these pages with its 280TE – a vehicle produced to showcase the very best that the company was capable of in the early 1980s. Later in that decade the company released another show car, this time based around the smaller and more recent 190E model. The car was an expression of luxury, developed around the new wide-body 190 bodykit.

From the outside, there was no way this car could be called a standard 190. Even the colour was new, a Zender specific shade of metallic gold which was more vibrant than any Mercedes hue of the era. Initially the car was fitted with a standard 190 grille albeit colour coded, whereas it later received a large central star in the style of the SEC.

Zender fitted its full bodykit to the car, with new bumpers, side skirts, and modifications to most side panels to fit large wheelarch extensions in the style of the Audi Quattro. A large three-piece spoiler was added to the tail, and the whole creation completed with a set of 16" Zender Turbo alloys.



"The interior followed the warm-hued theme, with two tone caramel and brown leather."

Completing the look was a pair of painted door mirrors to match the body colour

The interior followed the warm-hued theme, with two tone caramel and brown leather. The front seats were Recaro CSEs with full electrical operation, matched by individual Zender bucket seats in the back. Between the rear seats was a console with Blaupunkt Heidelberg radio, cassette holders, and two pairs of Sennheiser headphones to ensure comfort and calm from those in the back. Ideal for fans of 80s excess with young families, perhaps? Front seat passengers were kept entertained by a Blaupunkt Bamberg stereo.

All four seats were heated, and weren't the only items of interior trim to be covered in leather. Unlike the standard 190, the majority of surfaces in the car were hide-trimmed. The dashboard, centre console, door trims, headlining and side rails were all trimmed in caramel leather, finished with a caramel Zender steering wheel. Even the pillars and sun visors were leather-trimmed. The parcel shelf was refinished, incorporating six radio



Modded Mercs



speakers.

To have replicated this car in period using the Zender catalogue would have cost something in the region of 100,000DM – when a Mercedes 500SEL as around the 75,000DM mark, it becomes clear that this was an overt expression of wealth and not a car many were likely to see in their local environs.

Zender later developed additional bodykit items for the

"To have replicated this car in period using the Zender catalogue would have cost something in the region of 100,000DM."

190, including an SEC style bonnet and different rear spoilers. But none of these cars matched the visual drama of the initial wide-body kit.

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300SL Roadster 1988F

Signal Red, matching hardtop, black soft top, Mushroom leather interior, auto gearbox, elec windows, cruise, OTG, centre armrest, rear seats, orig alloy wheels, FSH, 54,000m . . . **£37,950**



500SEC Coupe 1989G

Almandine Red metallic, Mushroom leather, 4 speed auto, cruise, aircon, electric seats, electric sunroof, leather steering wheel and gearknob, original 15 hole alloys, FSH, 94,000m **£17,950**



280SL Roadster 1985C

Midnight Blue, matching hardtop, new black soft top, blue leather, auto gearbox, air conditioning, electric windows, rear seats, original alloy wheels, FSH, 92,000m **£24,950**



220SEb Coupe 1966D

Original colour scheme of Midnight Blue with pale grey leather, four speed column change auto, fully restored and immaculate condition throughout, 49,000m, believed genuine . . **£44,950**



E320 Sportline Cabriolet 1994L

Blue/Black metallic, grey leather, black soft top, 4 speed auto, cruise, airbag, electric seats, elec adj steering column, leather steering wheel, orig Sportline 15" alloys, FSH, 96,000m . . . **£15,950**



SL500 Roadster 1994M

Midnight Blue, matching hardtop, black soft top, Mushroom leather, rear seats, 5 speed automatic, aircon, cruise, electric seats, original 8 hole alloys, FSH, 81,000m **£12,950**



250SL Roadster 1967E

Papyrus White, matching hardtop, black soft top, red MB Tex, auto, PAS, original steel wheels with hubcaps, fully restored bodily & mechanically inc rebuilt engine **£79,950**



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Andrew Roberts Contributor

Benz On Film:
1965 Mercedes 230SL

TWO FOR THE ROAD

Hepburn may have been pretty, but the Pagoda stole the show.

A film shot in exquisite Panavision with direction from Stanley Donen, a script from Frederic Raphael and starring Audrey Hepburn and Albert Finney, with extensive location footage of France. If this combination of talents and attributes does not make *Two for the Road* one of the finest pictures of 1967, or indeed any other year, it has the additional virtue of featuring an RHD 1965 Mercedes-Benz 230SL.

As with any great cinema – *Two for the Road* is a considerable film by any standards – it is not so much how much screen time a car enjoys but how it is deployed within the narrative. The “Pagoda” – property of Donen, who had spent much time in the UK making the brilliant Peter Cook/Dudley Moore vehicle *Bedazzled* – symbolises the good life to the main protagonists. An imported German grandtourer is the mark of prosperity for Mark Wallace (Finney), instantly informing any client that here is an architect of substance. Likewise, His wife Joanna (Hepburn) dresses in the latest fashions but they both display a faint but persistent sense of ennui, the 230SL making them



"Two for the Road needs to be seen in order to appreciate its charm and its thoughtfulness."

no happier than the cheaper British cars they ran in their younger days. But the days of the MG TD and the Triumph Herald Convertible have long gone, as the Wallaces drive to northern France in an ostensible celebration of Mark gained a major new commission.

And that is as far as we are prepared to go, as *Two for the Road* needs to be seen

in order to appreciate its charm and its thoughtfulness, for it is an adult drama in the sense of the world. Of course, there are many other fine vehicles on display throughout the running time – the Ford Country Squire station wagon is my own favourite – but the abiding memory is of a film that plays with time, memory and emotion. The white Mercedes-Benz may help Mark and Joanna to resemble figures in a late 1960s advertising campaign for cigarettes or aftershave, but the reality is far removed from such facile images. 



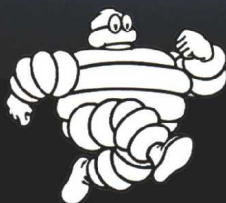


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MARKET NEWS



Buying a

W108



One of the most imposing saloons of the late 1960s, the W108 S-class makes an excellent investment today. Mercedes Driver editor **Sam Skelton** outlines how to buy the best.



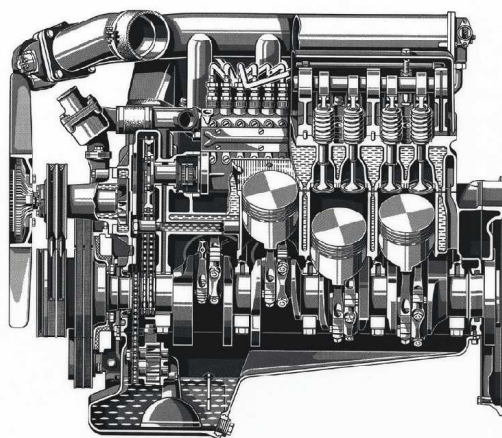


W108 S-Class Buying guide

Words: Sam Skelton

As a toned down replacement for the "Fintail" models, the W108 was never going to set the world on fire with revolutionary styling or talent. No, Mercedes preferred the path of evolution over revolution, smoothing off the lines, bringing the car up to date, but retaining the key Mercedes virtues of solidity and comfort. Paul Bracq lowered the Fintail's waistline, removed the now-passe fins, and smoothed over the whole car – the result was a softer, sleeker S-class to drag the model firmly into the 1970s.

There was a long wheelbase version too – following the 300SEL



master cylinder and battery for any rot around the bulkhead, as this is a structurally important area and any sign of rot or filler here is bad news. Look underneath the doors too, in the frames – rust here generally means bad news for the sills, even if they appear to be solid on the outside. Side trims should show no signs of rust – and unlike many Mercedes, there was no chrome trim on the arches as standard. If there is, ask what it's hiding. Panels can be sourced from Niemöller in Germany, and while cars being broken in the UK aren't exactly common, trim shouldn't be too hard to source.

"Mercedes preferred the path of evolution over revolution, retaining the key virtues of solidity and comfort."

Fintail, the market had grown used to a car slotting between the 300SE and the mighty 600. This car, launched as the W109, also featured self-levelling air suspension. Later, the 280SEL would bring the long wheelbase body into the W108 line by omitting the air suspension and other features.

Launched in 1965 and built until 1972, even the newest examples are now 46 years old – a card carrying classic, and one which by all accounts should be carrying a platinum Amex. And yet you don't need the platinum Amex to buy or run one, because they're relatively simple and smaller-engined models are still accessible to those on a budget. And with 359522 W108s and 23430 W109s built, there are more than enough to ensure

you can find a good one. If you want to get yourself behind the wheel, here's what you need to know.

BODY AND TRIM

It's a 1960s saloon – there's a lot of metal and it can all rust. Your first check should be the paint – if it doesn't match well or if it's suspiciously new, chances are it's hiding recent repairs... and you don't know how good they are until you look closely. The worst areas are the spare wheel wells, plus the front wings. These rot out around the headlamps, and also behind the wheelarches. Check the jacking points by inserting the factory jack and using it as a lever – though we'd advise you to jack against load bearing components rather than the original points. Check under the brake

ENGINES

Mercedes W108s used a series of six cylinder and V8 engines from the M100, M108, M116, M117, M129, M130, and M189 families. The M108 and M129 are identical, save the fuel injection system on the M129. This engine was shared with the 250SL Pagoda. The M108 was fitted to the 250 and the M129 to the 250SE. The M116 and M117 V8s were used in the 280SE 3.5 and the 300SEL 4.5 respectively. The M189 is derived from the Adenauer, and was used in the 300SE and 300SEL models with fuel injection. Later 280 models, which replaced the 250 and 300 models, used the M130 six cylinder in varying states of tune. The M100 V8, drawn from the 600-series saloon, was fitted to the 300SEL 6.3.

Smoking on acceleration or deceleration could simply be valve stem seals, but it's equally possibly on any of these engines that it might be worn valve guides.

On carburetted 250 and 280 models, check the condition of the carbs. There should be no hesitation, the car should start well hot and cold, and the carbs should be in balance. They aren't hard to set up, so if they're not set up properly it will speak for the condition of the rest of the drivetrain.







W108 S-Class Buying guide

Fuel lines on the V8s are high pressure, so it's worth checking them before any test drive. Any deterioration could lead to an underbonnet fire if you're unlucky. They're also prone to timing chain stretch, which can damage valve guides, cause the cams to skip and lead to valve/piston interfacing which could cost a fortune to repair. Neglecting the camshaft oiler tubes can lead to camshaft failure – and these should be replaced, not reground – they're not suitable for the latter.

TRANSMISSIONS

All models used gearboxes developed and built by Mercedes itself, with a choice of three and four speed automatics and four and five speed manuals depending upon the age and engine of the car in question. Most manuals were four speed – the five speed was optional from 1969 on six cylinder models. Manual boxes don't pose many issues in service, though obviously you should check that the clutch isn't slipping and that the bite is good. Few UK cars are manual, but the rarity doesn't make them more valuable or more difficult to source spare parts for. Manuals were available with floor or column shift.

The automatics used were again Mercedes' own, the 722.2. Mercedes' first in house automatic was in production for 22 years in various forms, and spares are widely available. Six cylinder models used a hydraulic coupling, while a torque converter was used on the V8 models with a slightly stronger derivative of the same box (dubbed 722.0). It's a fully hydraulic box, with the exception of the kickdown solenoid, and as such there is relatively little that can go wrong with it. Nonetheless, ensure that the parking pawl operates correctly, that all gears operate as intended and that the fluid is a bright cherry red. Check the shift quality too – if it's slow, harsh or slipping then



"Fuel lines on the V8s are high pressure, so it's worth checking them before any test drive. Any deterioration could lead to an underbonnet fire if you're unlucky."

the box may need a rebuild – or it could be a vacuum line loose from the modulator.

Differentials tend to be long-lasting, but even the newest are fast approaching fifty years old now. Check the history file for evidence of a rebuild – if not, repeatedly engage forward and reverse gears and listen for clonking noises. Any reputable specialist should be able to rebuild one.

SUSPENSION, STEERING AND BRAKES

Check where the steering box bolts to the chassis rail, as on heavily corroded cars the chassis rail has been known to crack here owing

to the forces placed upon it by the steering box. Noise from the steering box might be caused by worn engine mounts – they can cause the exhaust to make contact with the steering box. This is more dangerous on cars with the above corrosion issues, but is another reason why the area should be checked carefully.

The W108 is independently sprung using double wishbones at the front, with a diagonal swing axle incorporating air suspension for self-levelling on W109 models. Front suspension overhauls aren't cheap – while parts are inexpensive it's labour intensive. In particular, check the kingpins for excess movement – there should be relatively little



W108 S-Class Buying guide

movement in a good example. Rubber bushes deteriorate – these are something we'd recommend doing (and negotiating for) on any car if there isn't a recent bill to cover replacement.

We'd avoid models fitted with air suspension unless they've had recent work – neither the valves nor the airbags are cheap.

W108s use discs on the front and rear – with wider calipers and vented discs on the 4.5 and 6.3-litre models. The system is reliable in service – discs aren't prone to warping, and handbrakes rarely pose a problem if maintained regularly. Many have upgraded smaller-engined cars to the higher specification brakes but it is not necessary – you shouldn't value a car more highly as a result of this being done. Discs and pads are available, and cost small change – we found pads for under £10, and front discs for under £30/pair.

INTERIOR

Make sure you buy a car with a good interior, as retrimming isn't cheap. Heater levers can stick owing to broken valves – not a painful job, unlike replacing a leaking matrix or blown heater blower motor. These necessitate removing the dashboard – bank on 40 hours labour whether you do it yourself or pay a professional. If you want a working heater, it's best to check first.



While the W108 and W109 were well equipped by the standards of the 1960s, there's very little by modern standards to go wrong. Check the electric windows where fitted, and the air conditioning in the more upmarket variants. It's not likely you'll encounter significant issues, but even if you do the parts are available to put them right.

HOW MUCH?

£1500-2000 buys a six cylinder saloon in need of a lot of work, or you could shell out nearer to £5500-7000 for something usable. Add fifty percent for a good V8 – a 3.5 or 4.5 in either length, with the best costing about £20000. That will just about get you a usable 300SEL 6.3 – projects are still around the £10k mark, and the very best can be north of £50000.

TECH SPEC

	250S	250SE	280SE	300SEL	280SE 3.5	300SEL 6.3
Engine	2497cc	2778cc	2996cc	3499cc	6333cc	
Max power	130 bhp	150 bhp	160 bhp	170 bhp	200 bhp	250 bhp
Max torque	143 lbf.ft	159 lbf.ft	180 lbf.ft	180 lbf.ft	211 lbf.ft	370 lbf.ft
0-60 mph	10.5 secs	9.6 secs	9.0 secs	9.5 secs	8.5 secs	6.7 secs
Max Speed	113 mph	120 mph	120 mph	120 mph	130 mph	137 mph
Length mm	4900	4900	4900	5000	4900	5000
Width mm	1810	1810	1810	1810	1810	1810
Weight kg	1470	1510	1560	1655	1610	1830

Conclusion

The W108 and W109 series Mercedes are still relatively simple by today's standards – and yet once upon a time they were lauded as the best cars in the world. While prices are rising, the six cylinder models are still one of the most accessible luxury 1960s saloon families, and prices aren't looking set to hit the stratosphere quite yet. Yes, a bad one will cost a king's ransom to restore, but such is the availability of parts that if you buy a nice one you'll have no problem keeping it in good order.

What would we buy? That depends on what we wanted. A 280SE 3.5 or a 300SEL 6.3 are undoubtedly the best investments, but equally they're among the most expensive to buy in the first place. Ideally, we'd advise those on a budget to avoid the W109 as the extra cost and complexity of the air suspension can make ownership an expensive nightmare unless adequately maintained. If we just wanted something pleasant to potter about in, the 250S would be more than up to the job and is the cheapest there is, condition dependent. We'd advise an automatic gearbox, most have leather or MB-TEX, and while electrical goodies can appear desirable we would choose a basic an example as we could get to minimize the likelihood of broken toys. As ever, it's imperative to put condition first – a shabby 250S will cost you far more than a nice 280SE in the long run.

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1995 Mercedes-Benz SL60 AMG

A rare model, but for serious collectors only

It's a top example of the ultimate collectors' R129. The paint is excellent, as is the panelwork. It looks well in Azurite Blue, and while we're not fans of the hardtop we know that a: it helps sell an R129 and b: It probably adds strength which would be useful given the amount of power an SL60 puts out. This hardtop isn't the panoramic type, just a standard steel roof, but is in good condition inside and out. The big deep AMG wheels look like they mean business, and set the car off as distinct from other AMG style R129s. We know this car's had paint correction during its time with Hilton and Moss, but



we can't see where – an excellent job has been done.

Beige leather (275A) might seem like a fairly low key choice for such a model, but it looks the part in here. With the walnut trim there's little to betray this car's supreme power from inside, it's a nice soft Mercedes with a good interior, in good condition. We'd rather see an original Becker in place of the aftermarket Sony radio, but this is a very small niggle and one which doesn't really detract from the condition of the rest of it. The LCD screens all work, the windows work, the air con is good. Obviously we couldn't check the hood but we're told that that's in the same excellent order as the rest.

£ One to buy

Mileage: 35,162 miles
Price: £74,950



And if it looks right, it runs better. Sadly we couldn't hear this car start from cold as it was withdrawn from storage while we were testing another vehicle, but nothing suggests that it would be anything other than as it should be. When warm, the idle is low and even, and on the road it feels like it should. What will be difficult to convey is the phenomenal acceleration available under kickdown – you'll need to use this car's big and sharp brakes to rein it in if you use the kickdown too often.

"We couldn't check the hood but we're told that that's in the same excellent order as the rest."



With five previous owners, you'd expect this car to have a useful sheaf of paperwork – and it does. This includes a full printout from Oldbury Motors of work carried out on the car from 2001 until 2011, all the old MoTs, a full book pack and a clear HPI check. Hilton and Moss have done some mild paintwork correction, new tyres, a machine polish and have re-bolstered the drivers seat. Apart from that the car was near perfect upon arrival and reflects that today.

Conclusion

SL60s are few and far between, and while the price may look high for an R129 it should be borne in mind that the SL60 is not just any R129. If you want a cheap car to use, we would suggest you look for an SL500 instead – if you want an exhilarating investment then this is far more likely to be the car for you. It's a good colour combination, a desirable model, has a very good history file and is almost certain to represent a good investment. We would be very surprised if this car stays for sale for long.

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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**



June 2018 saw a rise in classic Mercedes-Benzes offered and sold at auction in the UK, with a total of 58 making it to the block and a solid 43 being hammered down, for a very healthy rate of 74 per cent.

Headlining the list in terms of nominal value was a 1968 230SL "Pagoda" finished in Signal Red with original black leather upholstery and correctly-matched black steering wheel and boss. It was hammered down at Anglia Car Auctions on the 16th of June in King's Lynn.

In right hand drive specification with automatic transmission, it

was said to be sold to fund a potato shed at the vendor's farm, an unusual confession borne out in the sale guide.

Showing 48,000 miles with history dating back to the 1980s, its premium-inclusive £117,660 was a good return for an early 230SL and would indicate that the car's pedigree matched its description in the catalogue.

However, with prices of £150,000-200,000 regularly on show for the very best restored 280SL examples, it would appear the old stigma of the 230 was back out in play again.

In theory, the later 280SL





£ Auction guide

Pagoda models carried a 20 bhp premium over their earlier 230/250SL stablemates and this was to offset newly fitted emissions equipment driven by the United States market. In practice, all Pagodas are extremely similar to drive with the torque characteristics of the M127/129/130 straight six engines the main feature, with top speed not really a consideration.

"Why there is such a price spread for Pagoda SL models remains somewhat of a contentious point."

Therefore why there is such a price spread for these models remains somewhat of a contentious point and in some ways this often makes a 230SL a wiser buy for the pocket book, particularly for those looking to keep the vehicle for the medium to long term.

Also at ACA were 15 other Mercedes and their 15 sold from 16 offered ranks as this column's best ever observed single house return to date. Proving the market's durability, Classic Car Auctions at Warwickshire also sold 20 of 28 Benzes offered on the 1st of June in an impressive effort.

The most intriguing of the CCA offerings was a 1991 W201 2.5 Cosworth which achieved £9,020 – surely the buy of the



Above: 230SL sold for 280 money. It's worth watching these...



£ Auction guide





month. Its automatic specification may have held its value back for some, but having been exhibited at MB-World and previously owned by former Cosworth chief designer Mike Hall, it was surely one for the discerning modern classics collector.

In another demonstration of just how much value there is out there right now,

Anglia's 2003 R230 SL55 AMG achieved £15,052, demonstrating that supercar performance in a convertible body can be had for much less than the £20k threshold claimed by some.

Showing 78,000 miles and seven service stamps, it sure had a lot going for it, and the Brilliant Silver/grey leather combination boded well for future resale.

Back on the chrome bumper side, Anglia's star saloon offering was 1978 450SEL 6.9, surely an



"CCA's 1991 W201 2.5 Cosworth achieved £9,020 – surely the buy of the month."

enticing prospect for any Mercedes fan at £12,084. 6.9s have suffered a downturn in recent months as the money for performance saloons leans towards the plastic bumper icons such as the W201 Cosworths and of course those ever-available AMG-tuned SL models.

One could reflect on the sub-£20k bracket this month in the knowledge that aside from the SL55 AMG and 6.9 already mentioned, purchasing options also included a W124 500E (£17,380 at CCA), W210 E55 AMG (£7,480 at CCA) and a W124 E320 Sportline Cabrio (£9,460 at CCA) – a truly superb lineup of performance options to suit just about every budget in that window.

This is truly encouraging for the modern classic fan in particular and it's reassuring to know that with a keen eye and some leg-work, a proper performance classic can



Auction guide



"The bargain buy of the year: a 1994 W140 S500 LWB made £520 at Anglia."

be obtained without breaking the bank.

For those however who have perhaps cashed out part of their pension after many years of fruitful work, there was something for them too in the form of Anglia's R230 SL65 AMG at £42,930.

With 604bhp and 740 lb.ft of torque (1,000 newton metres, clearly the engineers' target), it sits second only to the SL65 AMG Black edition of the same car and shares the same torque figure with that vehicle, only conceding 57 bhp to the most premium AMG offering at that time.

This model derivative rarely comes to auction and those who participated in the bidding must have appreciated its 55,000 warranted miles and documented history. Whilst showing a little wear on the driver's bolster area, a common wear area on the R230 model, it did present exceptionally well throughout. One feels it was money well spent given the model's rarity, especially in right hand drive form.

Finishing things off this month is the bargain buy of the year: a 1994 W140 S500 LWB at Anglia. Last on the road in 2011, and showing a mere 131,000 miles, it looked more than ready to return to the tarmac and at just £520 – who wouldn't want to take the chance?

Sold Mercs at auction XXXXXXXXXXXX

Date	House	Car	Result including premium and VAT	Venue
01-Jun-18	CCA	2001 W220 S500	3300	Warwickshire Event Centre
01-Jun-18	CCA	1989 R107 500SL	18480	Warwickshire Event Centre
01-Jun-18	CCA	1992 R129 500SL	6820	Warwickshire Event Centre
01-Jun-18	CCA	2002 W210 E55 AMG	7480	Warwickshire Event Centre
01-Jun-18	CCA	1986 R107 500SL	31900	Warwickshire Event Centre
01-Jun-18	CCA	1967 W113 230SL	50050	Warwickshire Event Centre
01-Jun-18	CCA	1990 W201 190E 2.0	1650	Warwickshire Event Centre
01-Jun-18	CCA	1992 W124 500E	17380	Warwickshire Event Centre
01-Jun-18	CCA	1991 W140 300SE	6710	Warwickshire Event Centre
01-Jun-18	CCA	1991 W201 190E 2.5 Cosworth	9020	Warwickshire Event Centre
01-Jun-18	CCA	1999 R129 SL500	22550	Warwickshire Event Centre
01-Jun-18	CCA	1985 R107 280SL	24708	Warwickshire Event Centre
01-Jun-18	CCA	1983 R107 500SL	15400	Warwickshire Event Centre
01-Jun-18	CCA	1982 R107 500SL	9900	Warwickshire Event Centre
01-Jun-18	CCA	1959 W180 220S (Ponton)	14300	Warwickshire Event Centre
01-Jun-18	CCA	1994 W124 E220 Estate	1870	Warwickshire Event Centre
01-Jun-18	CCA	1990 W201 190E 2.0	2090	Warwickshire Event Centre
01-Jun-18	CCA	1996 W124 E320 Sportline Cabrio	9460	Warwickshire Event Centre
01-Jun-18	CCA	1993 R129 SL280	3740	Warwickshire Event Centre
01-Jun-18	CCA	1993 W124 320CE	14850	Warwickshire Event Centre
16-Jun-18	Anglia	1994 W201 190E 2.0	2226	King's Lynn
16-Jun-18	Anglia	1978 W123 230C	7420	King's Lynn
16-Jun-18	Anglia	1983 W123 230	2438	King's Lynn
16-Jun-18	Anglia	1984 W123 230E	1400	King's Lynn
16-Jun-18	Anglia	1968 W113 230SL	117660	King's Lynn
16-Jun-18	Anglia	1988 W124 300CE	2544	King's Lynn
16-Jun-18	Anglia	1991 W124 300CE-24 Sportline	1500	King's Lynn
16-Jun-18	Anglia	1999 R129 SL320	4346	King's Lynn
16-Jun-18	Anglia	1981 R107 380SL	8745	King's Lynn
16-Jun-18	Anglia	1978 W116 450SEL 6.9	12084	King's Lynn
16-Jun-18	Anglia	1985 R107 500SL	11766	King's Lynn
16-Jun-18	Anglia	2000 C215 CL500	7102	King's Lynn
16-Jun-18	Anglia	1994 W140 S500 LWB	520	King's Lynn
16-Jun-18	Anglia	2003 R230 SL55 AMG	15052	King's Lynn
16-Jun-18	Anglia	2004 R230 SL65 AMG	42930	King's Lynn
21-Jun-18	Brightwells	1983 W126 500SEL	4950	Leominster Modern Classics
21-Jun-18	Brightwells	1988 R107 500SL	16280	Leominster Modern Classics
21-Jun-18	Brightwells	2001 W208 CLK320 Cabriolet	2090	Leominster Modern Classics
21-Jun-18	Brightwells	1997 R129 SL280	2420	Leominster Modern Classics
21-Jun-18	Brightwells	1993 R129 SL280	5500	Leominster Modern Classics
21-Jun-18	Brightwells	2012 R230 SL350	20300	Leominster Modern Classics
21-Jun-18	Brightwells	1997 R170 SLK230	5500	Leominster Modern Classics
21-Jun-18	Brightwells	2001 R170 SLK230	2090	Leominster Modern Classics

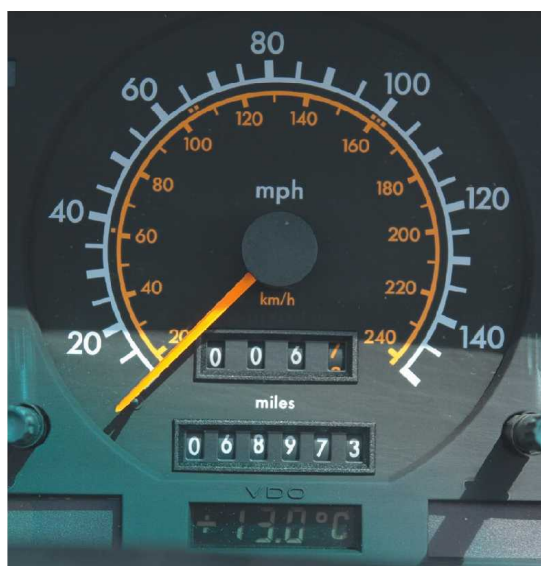


1991 Mercedes-Benz 300SL

Our favourite R129 this year – and relatively affordable for its condition

We might regard silver as passé today, but the Brilliant Silver of this 300SL is a beautiful period touch from the era in which silver was beginning to establish precedence on upmarket cars. And the paint on this car is as good as you'd expect of a £20,000 SL. We couldn't find a scuff or a scrape, nor could we find any parking knocks upon its flanks. The Sacco panels are equally good and crack free all round, with no paint discrepancies – and crucially, the requisite shading difference which shows the car's not had a poor respray. The eight hole alloys are likewise in good order.

Inside, the black leather is an unusual touch – we'd have expected grey, but the black works far better. It's snug and



comfortable, sporting yet upmarket. We like the Becker Grand Prix 2000 radio too – an original specification touch albeit one which isn't present on the car's original data card. As an early model this car is relatively free of electronic displays, with just the external temperature display at risk of damage. It works perfectly on this car, too. We didn't test the radio, but all other electronic gadgets worked as intended. The roof doesn't let the car down either, it's in good condition and cleans up beautifully.

This car had been started before our arrival, but we nonetheless drove the car before it had warmed up fully. It performs as well when cold as when warm, and there's no hesitation or lumpiness throughout. The brakes and steering work exactly as they

£ One to buy

Mileage: 68,973 miles
Price: £19,950



should – there's little to say as there's little wrong. In fact, the steering on this R129 is the best we've experienced – the weight distribution is good and the turn-in direct. This car is too early for any of Mercedes' issues with biodegradable wiring looms, so potential buyers needn't fear the worst.

"We like the Becker Grand Prix 2000 radio too – an original specification touch albeit one which isn't present on the car's original data card."

Hilton and Moss has painted the bonnet and wings to remove stone chips – the work is excellent and the colour a good match. It's also been serviced throughout and given an overhaul of the suspension and the brakes. The history file retains all barring the service book – but including the rare emergency spanner for raising the hood. This car's two previous owners have doted on it – and it is deserving of a third to do the same.

Conclusion

While you could easily find a cheaper 300SL 12v if you wanted, it would be difficult to find another early example that was quite so nice. We think these straight sixes are the sweetest-handling and most Mercedes-esque R129s, and not only are they the best entry point but the best model. This one is the best we have seen. The period colour scheme helps it too, as does the perfect way in which it drives. If you want an SL to own, enjoy and cherish, this is exactly the sort of car you should be looking at.

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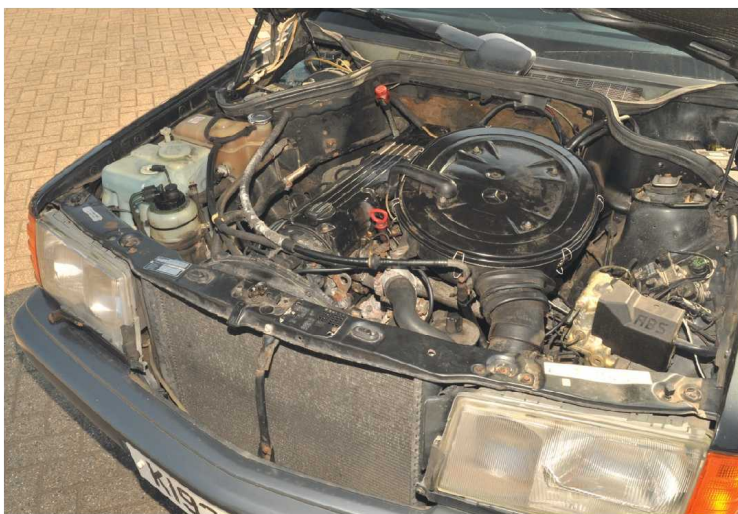




Project Mercedes *pt3*

Our 190's freeing up with use, reckons Matt.







Project Mercedes

Words: Matthew Bell

It's been a slow month with improvements to the Merc. In fact, it's been a month of literally no improvements. I'll explain.

I got to spend a bit of time with the 190E recently. A feature down in Crawley proved to be the perfect opportunity to properly get to know the car, seeing as I would be sat at Dartford tunnel for quite some time. The journey down went surprisingly well. No traffic whatsoever and the Merc performed beautifully. I can't quite believe how nice this car drives. Coming from a car that runs on stiff coilovers sat with just enough room above the tyres, the Merc feels quite literally like you're floating on clouds; not something I'm used to, but now something I want every single day.

The auto box is behaving OK. It has its tendencies and I'm still frustrated with its lack of enthusiasm off the line. Gaps entering roundabouts can make for some hair-raising moments, but once going, it doesn't lack any power. It's more than capable with keeping up with traffic and I'd go as far as to say that I somewhat surprised a 2006 Porsche Cayenne who tried to brush me out of the way on the A1(M).

On my return leg from Crawley, somewhat tired and rather warm, I hit horrific traffic at Dartford. My main concern wasn't so much me but the creeping temperatures in the Merc. Given what had happened when we picked the Merc up, I wasn't prepared to negotiate three lanes in thick traffic to find the hard shoulder. So; all windows down, sunroof open, heaters on full. It brought the temperatures down to a more sensible 80-85 degrees before I could turn the heater down and breathe. A few more tactical heater blasts saw me through the almost two hour delay through Dartford and back on my route back home. From then on in the 190 was a joy to drive, providing the effortless drive I needed.

As I reported in my previous



"You can jump in it after a long day and cruise home without a care in the world."

update; the gearbox and throttle response is slow, but I have since (sort of) rectified this through the art of actually driving it. A thorough blast to and from work has done the trick, taking it to the redline a few times appears to have given it a new lease of life and is in fact changing gear much sharper and smoother. Where before you would sort of lurch under any throttle when changing up, it is now noticeably less violent, although of course still somewhat existent. It also appears to be more eager off the line. I can't quite work out whether I've adapted to the way it behaves and inputted more throttle, or whether the car has begun reacting more eagerly. Either

Above: Near 200,000 miles in, our 190E still drives well

way, it's improved the drive ten-fold. In truth, sometimes cars just require driving them to make them feel like a new car again.

The next issue we have is starting it. For reasons unknown at the moment, upon twisting the key, without using half throttle, it will continue trying to start, without actually firing. The spark plugs were recently changed, so I can't imagine that's the issue. The other issue is that upon starting it, it won't idle by itself, instead opting to stall. You have to keep the throttle slightly open, only to about 1000-1500rpm to get some fluids circulated before allowing the car to idle without assistance, which is somewhat frustrating when you're in a rush. It also proves difficult in tight circumstances when you'd usually allow the clutch in auto to pull you forward slowly, instead it chooses to stall at the worst possible moment.

All in all I've started to fall for the Merc. It's simple. You can jump in it after a long day and cruise home without a care in the world. It takes little effort to drive it; in fact you look forward to lounging back in comfort with that superb armrest. Next up we'll be taking a look at why it won't idle by itself and then finally focus on adjusting the spring in the gearbox. ■



Technical Tips

Words: Peter Simpson

Wrong sort of rust..

As explained in 'tip of the month', Mercedes Benz motor cars 'of a certain age' do now have an unfortunate reputation for corrosion. It's important to understand, though, that there are two different types of rust that affect cars, one of which is a lot more serious than the other...

The difference comes down to how and where the rust starts. Outside-in corrosion begins, as the name implies, on the outside of a vehicle and generally results from a paintwork issue of some kind. This could be a stone-chip through to bare metal which isn't touched in, or an unprotected edge where a

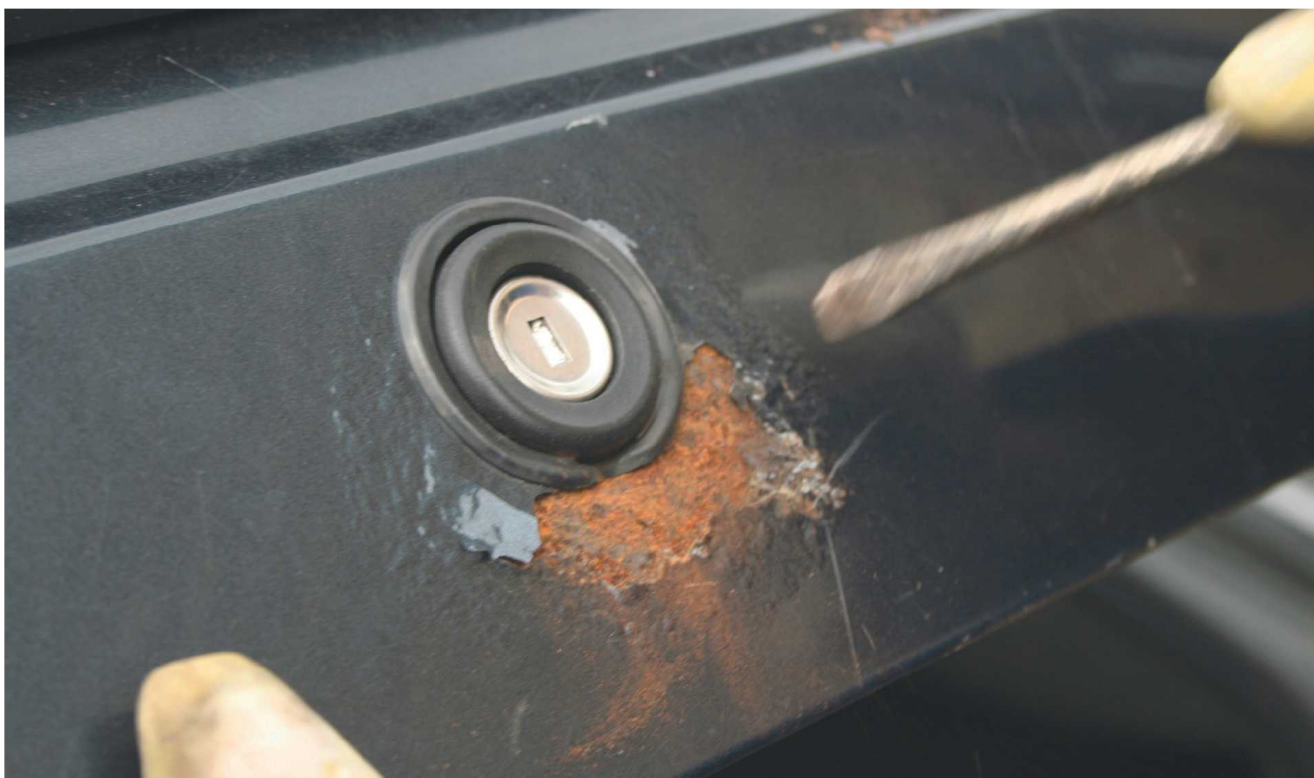
Below: Rust like this looks unsightly, but chances are it's only on the surface and therefore relatively easy to deal with

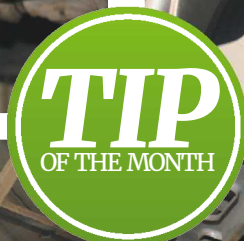
hole has been drilled – for example to take an aftermarket aerial of some kind. Rust like this can spread quite quickly, and look unsightly. However because it's only on the surface it's relatively easy to deal with by rubbing down to remove and then treating with rustproofers and repainting.

Inside-out corrosion, however, is a lot more sinister. This starts on the inside of the panel – typically it'll be inside a box section that isn't adequately ventilated or a mud trap where dirt and road-salt has built up. It can also start inside a lap-joint, where two pieces of metal are spot-welded together and moisture gets in between the two. Once

it's started, inside-out corrosion munches away, usually undisturbed, until a pin-prick appears on the outer edge. By that time, though, the real damage will have been done, the panel will have been seriously weakened. When this happens, the only permanent solution is to either renew the affected panel in its entirety or to cut all the rusty metal right out and replace it with new metal that's properly and continuously welded in.

There are a few places – for example the sills – which can be affected by either type of rusty, but in most cases it's fairly straightforward to ascertain which is which.





Front Crossmember Repair

As we are all painfully aware, the period from 1996 to 2005 wasn't exactly our favourite marque's finest hour. The engineering side was in general everything it had always been, but rust was, for the first time ever in MB history, a significant issue. Sometimes it was more cosmetic than structural, but often it was far more than skin-deep with load-bearing and safety-critical areas rusting out in ways and with speed that few outside a Fiat or Alfa circles had seen previously! And while many of the worst cars will have been scrapped by now, there are still plenty of C and E-Class saloons and estates from the rusty era around. More worryingly, there's also some evidence that while later cars are generally better, they're still not as sturdy as Mercs from the classic era...

Anyway, one common problem area on many cars is the front crossmember/subframe – clearly a fairly important component from a structural/safety point of view! In theory, this should be checked thoroughly at MoT time. However 1995-on cars generally had an underbody belly tray which, if still present, covers the crossmember almost completely. Consequently, because testers aren't allowed to dismantle or remove anything during a test, it's far from unknown for

quite severe corrosion here to go undetected.

In one respect of course, the traditional MB build quality makes this problem more prevalent. On many lesser makes oil leaking from the engine helps keep front-end corrosion at bay. Mercedes Benz engines, however, often remain oil-tight well into old age!

Anyway, if the crossmember is corroded, it's usually the bottom horizontal closing section that's gone, and sometimes possible to repair what you have rather than fit a complete new item – cheaper and less labour. There are, though, MoT rules on what is and what is not permissible. Specifically, you can only weld a component like this if the original item was welded together, and you replace the whole of the corroded component. You cannot stick plates over rusted bits or even let new metal into what was originally one piece; the only acceptable method of repair is to cut away the whole of the plate/panel that was affected, and then weld a new replacement back in. The replacement part must also be at least as strong as the original, as must the way in which it was welded on. In effect, this means that if the original was spot-welded you must continuous-weld the replacement in – plug-welds may look like spot-welds to the untutored

eye, but they aren't as strong. Give the new section a decent coat of primer too on the inside to prevent the same thing from happening again.

Anyway, the brief picture sequence shows the key stages involved when my local garage came across a 1999 E-Class which, on the face of it, looked like a tidy and extremely well-preserved example. Which, apart from the front crossmember, it was...

Clockwise from main: Not pleasant – and, until the engine underbelly tray was taken off during a routine service, completely invisible! As this carries the main front suspension loads, the consequences of failure here don't bear thinking about, though fortunately the rot was restricted only to the lower panel, meaning a welded-on repair was possible; After cutting and grinding away the remains of the old panel, Paul made up a cardboard template for the new panel that needs welding in – hold the cardboard up against the crossmember, trace round it with a black marker, cut it out and then check you've got the size and shape correct before 'translating' your measurements on to a piece of sheet steel; The new section needs to be at least as strong as the original material – to save arguments I'd go for a slightly thicker gauge. I'd also recommend giving the inside surface a good coat of paint – use weld-through primer where you'll be making the join. You can paint the outside surface after welding on, and, of course, get some wax rustproofer inside; As well as replacing the rusty panel with a piece of at least equal strength to the original, it must also be welded on in a way which replicates at least the strength of the original joins. Plug-welds aren't as strong as spot-welds, and really, the safest way is to continuous-weld right around the edge.



Technical Tips

Oil's well.

One of the things I like about servicing Mercs is the way in which many retained a paper-type oil filter long after almost everyone else had switched to canisters. There isn't a massive financial advantage in paper these days, but I just like the idea that you are changing only what you actually need to. The filters are generally easy to access too, from on top – no grovelling around underneath with a filter removal tool, and no nasty loss of oil as soon as the filter comes loose – oil which generally finds a way of getting where you don't want it, however careful you are about positioning the drain can.

Anyway, the procedure is generally straightforward – undo the top, pull the old filter out – have a piece of absorbent cloth handy to put it on, and don't forget it will be very oily. Drain the oil from underneath – the filter housing will drain with it, fit a new rubber sealing ring to the top and then refit the top – but do please take note that the torque setting stamped thereon is not quoted for fun – an overtightened housing top can distort or crack. Refill with fresh oil – and job done!



Spare Safety

Often, when an older but very good/low mileage car is offered for sale, the seller will mention that the spare wheel has never been used. Though rare enough to be worthy of note, this isn't actually that uncommon these days; despite the awful state of many roads, tyres are better and punctures rarer, and all an unused spare really means is that the car in question has never had a puncture requiring a wheelchange. If, though, the spare wheel is the same as the four on the road, it is kind-of nice to have one that's effectively brand new – especially if it's a matching alloy.

I would, though, be very dubious indeed about using the 'new' tyre from a new spare wheel like this of it's the same age. Rubber can be formulated in a number of different ways, and while it's possible to produce it with a very long shelf-

Above: An unused spare alloy wheel is a nice thing to have for sure, but don't trust a 'new' tyre that's over ten years old

life, that comes at the expense of other attributes which are needed for automotive use. Rubber is also affected by exposure to ultra-violet light and changes in temperature, and while it's arguable that a tyre which has spent 15 or more years in a car boot won't have had much UV exposure, it will certainly have had plenty of temperature variation. Really, ten years is the maximum shelf (or boot) life of a tyre; beyond that there's a real risk of disintegration or deflation at speed. So keep the new wheel by all means, but buy a new tyre.

Incidentally, if – as is often the case – an alloy wheeled car comes with a steel spare, then even if that wheel is the same size as the others, it should be regarded only as a 'get you home' spare – having a steel and an alloy wheel on the same axle can affect braking and handling.



Trapped in the Tray

Finally this month, a tip coupled to a memory from my car dealing days – I've now retired but for many years ran an internet-based car trading business. Anyway, one car I still recall from the thousands that passed through my hands in that time was a 1995 S-Class – I can't recall the exact model as it was twelve years ago, but I do recall that at the time the local British Car Auctions branch I'd bought the beast from had just introduced an in-house valeting service – or Smart Retail Clean as it was branded. I let them have a go, and sure enough, the car came out gleaming. It was, though, still a bit of a struggle to shift and I never bought another.

About three months later, the buyer messaged me: "A fault has been identified with the car". It emerged that it had gone to as free-fit centre for a new exhaust clamp to be fitted, and they had informed him that the car had a 'major oil leak' because there was a lot of oil in the under-engine tray. The quantity

Above: S Class engine came up very nicely after a professional clean, but it would have been better if the undertray had been taken off first

of oil meant, they said, that it had to be fixed as a matter of urgency and at a cost of over £500, though given that they couldn't tell him where, exactly, the alleged oil leak was, it struck me as very odd indeed that any price, let alone a high one, was being quoted..

Of course, the car wasn't leaking at all, and what the free-fit centre had shown my customer was the muck that had been cleaned off the engine, much of which was still trapped in the undertray!

Two lessons to draw from this I think. Firstly, if you are having an engine cleaned with a power washer you really should take the undertray off first. Secondly, be suspicious of claims that a major fault has been found that are accompanied by a large repair estimate but with no evidence of proper investigation. Obviously I've no way of knowing whether this was a genuine attempt to help by the free-fit centre concerned or attempted deliberate con, but I know which way my suspicions lean!

Stop smoke signals

A fuel filter change is part of the routine service schedule for most diesel Mercs and due, typically, every 15,000 miles. As part of the change, you're supposed to prime the new filter with fresh diesel fuel. That, though, isn't always as easy to arrange as it sounds; where do you actually get about 500ml of diesel from, other than by buying a gallon or so and tipping some into the filter and the rest into the tank?

I prefer to kill two birds with one stone and instead fill the fuel filter with a 'stop smoke' type cleaner additive. The engine will run on that, and besides being more convenient than faffing about with fuel cans, it gives the injectors a good dose of cleaner at the very start. Fill the filter, and pour the rest into the tank...



Above: Priming a diesel fuel filter with cleaner is a lot more convenient than trying to pour fuel in, and your engine gets the benefit of a thorough cleanout...



Monty's MERC

Skelton's named his car, thanks to the work of the Python boys.

I think I'm going to start calling my Mercedes the Blue-Black Knight. The reasoning should be familiar to anyone who has ever watched Monty Python and the Holy Grail. The eponymous Black Knight was known for his bullish confidence and refusal to give in – famously refusing to acknowledge the loss of his arm, insisting it was a scratch, and finally conceding that the fight should be called “a draw”

following the loss of all his limbs.

And my old E220 Coupe is much the same. It holds the simple mantra of “None shall be stranded”, in accordance with the Python character's famous “None shall pass”. Here is a car that has had much thrown at it, things which would have consigned a lesser car to the scrapheap, and yet it still works every time without fail. We know there's a failed water pump housing, but 'tis but a scratch. The dead rear

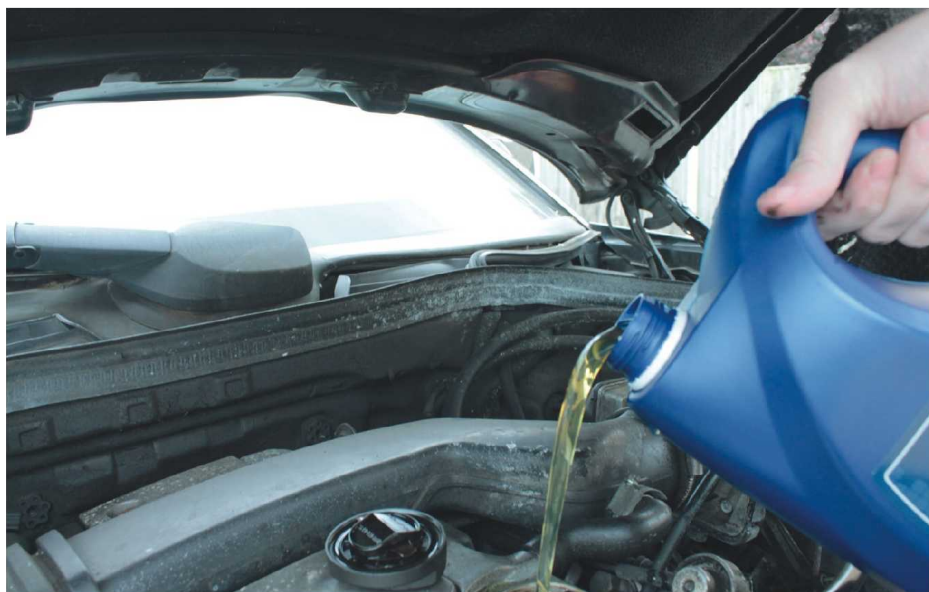
shock absorbers are merely flesh wounds. The battle scarred paint and rotten wing don't exist. And let's not even start on the dead windows on the offside or the failed central locking. It has, after all, had worse.

But the thing is, here is a car which backs up everyone's assertions about just what an old Mercedes should be able to do. Contrary to popular opinion, I maintain that a neglected Merc can break, and does corrode. My old estate is proof of



Sam Skelton *Editor*

1995 Mercedes E220 Coupe
Mileage: 181,091
Third instalment



"For those who argue that a Mercedes is not bombproof, I present the Blue-Black Knight."

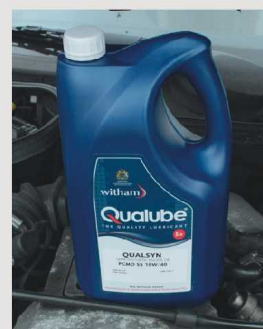
that, as Sam Mace can attest. But choose the right car – a nice simple four pot E-class, say, or maybe a 190 – and ensure it receives the correct basic maintenance, and it simply will not allow itself to die where other cars would give up. For those who argue that a Mercedes is not bombproof, I present the Blue-Black Knight. And even against concours examples of other marques, it would insist upon a draw at the very least.

This makes it all the more

upsetting that I haven't really used my coupe much of late. Because apart from the forays into neighbouring counties for days on tour, and the odd trip to Tesco, it's sat idle while other cars on my fleet have been exercised. But when I approached it again a couple of weeks ago after nearly a month at the back of the driveway, it started on the first turn of the key without needing a jump start.

I should start doing the jobs on it now – it isn't for want of parts, only time. I don't want to give the work to a garage if I can help it, as there is nothing that the car needs that is beyond my abilities. I need a new OSF window regulator (hint hint), a new OSR electric window motor (Hint), and I need to fit the new water pump and shocks. Then I'll have a car that works, at least – it will still need cosmetics such as the wing and some minor interior trim, but the flesh wounds will at least have been cured.

Fingers crossed anyway. Chances are it'll bite my ankles if not.



I have however found a new brand of oil I like, and the Merc seems to be liking it too. Witham Oils supply a range of lubricants - my car's too new for their new Classic range, but if the 20w50 is even half as good as the 10w40 then it's well worth a look.

Order from www.withamgroup.co.uk/shop.



James Bellis Contributor

1999 Mercedes E430

Mileage: 163,750

Third instalment

Courtesy Car

James's V8 barge goes out on loan... again!

As regulars will remember, I bought the W210 in January mainly to lend to my friend Martin, whose car expired when I was borrowing it.

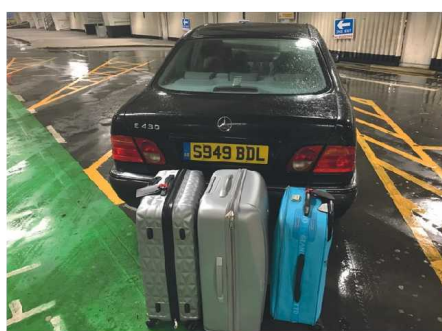
After two months of wallet busting motoring he bought an Audi A3 and handed the car back to me. In that time I have used it as a weekend car, an airport shuttle for a recent family holiday and a limousine to carry a Z-list celebrity to a charity ball that I attended with Editor Skelton.

It is lovely to drive, extremely quick and most importantly comfortable. It is refreshing to know that you have that power on tap. Now that the OEM Mercedes cassette and CD Changer are working, I can drive listening to 6 CDs of (mostly) Sting, Alanis Morissette and Cheryl Crow.

Fast forward three months and Martin's Audi A3 has decided that it no longer likes its gearbox, I am sure you can guess what is coming. Rather than have the AA tow him to a garage, he drives the broken car to me and breaks down a mile away. I come to the rescue in the E430 and tow him back to my house by rope.

His car then sits on my driveway and he takes off in my Rover 800 coupe. Three days later, I get a call to say that the handbrake is stuck and can I help. I fly over in the E430 and the Rover's handbrake immediately releases and I realise that the Rover 800 is too fragile for Martin. We load his golf clubs and trolley into the E430 and swap over vehicles. I breathe a sigh of relief.

Fast forward two months and Martin is grumbling about putting in £50 of fuel each week for his 5 mile round trip commute. So he has finally ordered a replacement gearbox, meaning I will



"Martin is grumbling about putting in £50 of fuel each week."

get the Merc back. Just as well because the previous owner has sold me a lovely cup holder which I can't wait to fit. Will make all those McDonalds trips, even better!

Once I get the car back, I intend to retire it for the summer and make use of my 800 Coupe and Spitfire whilst the sun is shining. The E430 can come back out for use in September once I winterise the other two. It will be used for evenings and weekends and for use by my wife when she needs a cruiser, seeing as her EV has a max range of 60 miles!



Matt Richardson Contributor

1983 230E saloon
Mileage: 135,000
Second instalment

The key to the situation

With the door key sourced, Matt now needs to tackle a replacement ignition barrel...

With my Barn Find Benz safely home the first thing to do was sorting out keys. The W123 were open but the steering was locked, and the wheels pointing off centre. Mercedes security was pretty thorough so you can't do much to extract the old parts without a key, and I needed one!

It's possible to read the key code from the lock barrel. The door handle should only come out with the key turned, but the drivers handle had been removed before I got the car but it had faired badly and when I tried to extract the lock barrel it crumbled apart and fell into tiny chunks.

The tip of the rod which extends from the handle into the door is X shaped and holds it in the door, releasing when the key is turned, so there was no way of non-destructively removing the passenger door handle.

Then, inspiration! I remembered Mercedes keep the details of every car ever built on file! A call to my local dealer, and with my V5 as proof of ownership they supplied me with the code to cut a key. I took that to a locksmith and very quickly had the key to my 230E in my hand.

I tried the new key in the passenger door and it worked! It locked the boot and glovebox as well, then I tried the ignition. Ah.

The key wouldn't turn. I tried spraying lube inside, tapping the key with a hammer in the lock and finally brute force with mole grips while shaking the steering wheel, but no joy. Ignition barrels do fail on these cars and it appears that had happened and the lock changed with no record.

This meant the steering lock and



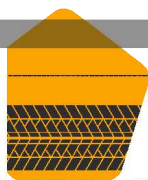
ignition barrel had to come out, but that wouldn't be easy as the anti-theft safeguards are tough. The locking part of the steering lock is a metal bar which extends into the steering column and retracts when the key is turned, and there is a smaller tab which locks the whole unit to the column preventing it from being removed, and also releases when the key is turned.

Above: Does anyone have any spare Petrol Blue hubcaps? Get in touch...



I called a couple of locksmiths to see if they could pick it, but no joy so turned to the internet for ideas. The best I could find was to hammer a large screw driver into the ignition lock barrel to break it and twist with mole grips.

Two screwdrivers later, it became apparent Mercedes toughened steel is stronger than off the shelf tools... Back to the drawing board...



Richard Sharman

Your MERC

Richard's Mercedes is ideal for the Thai climate...
and lets him live a boyhood fantasy

I had my father post your Mercedes Driver magazine to me here in Thailand where I have resided for the past 20 years. I have read it from back to front and enjoyed it. I picked up a childhood dream car here two years ago of which I could never afford at that time when I was a lad in Warwickshire UK many moons ago. A Mercedes Benz 190E.

My car is totally original but different in a way... shall we say "A sheep in wolf clothing". All the body kit fitted is genuine factory AMG fitted here new from the dealer showroom in Bangkok in 1993 by special order, but it's based on a 1.8e, 4 speed manual. I am no speed addict in my maturer years but still enjoy the sport stance and looks with comfortable motoring, so it suits me perfectly. The difficulty and rarity of finding an original 3.2 AMG 190e in the first place here in Thailand would be near impossible given the 100% import taxes, also running costs would be far higher. I was lucky this one also came with Evolution 2 alloy wheels, an original AMG Momo sports steering wheel and Zebrano wood capping kit – all period rare factory AMG options.

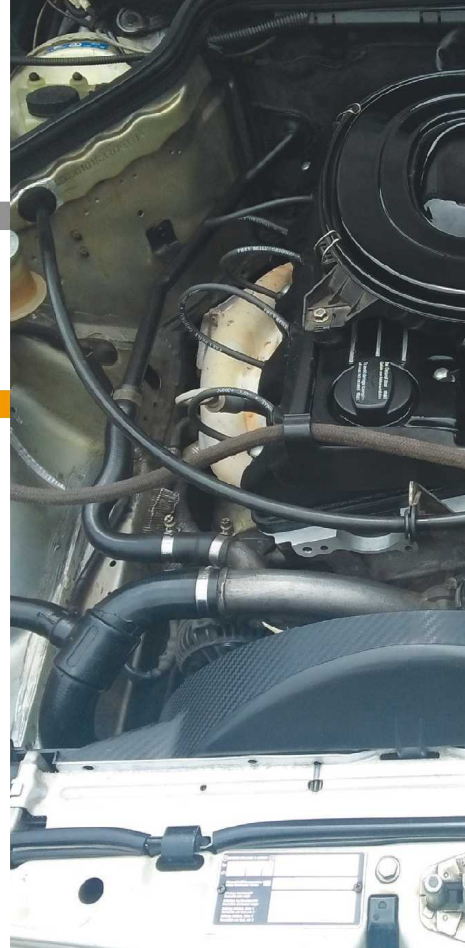
I love to look at and to drive this car – I've practically replaced all

Right: AMG bodykit was a factory order

serviceable parts with the original or OEM part over the past 2 years, not because it was broken but because I wanted it back to near new condition. The list is endless but including suspension, brakes, steering and suspension bushes, engine, gearbox mounts and drive couplings, a complete fuel injection system from fuel tank to injectors and even a new air conditioning compressor. It was all worth the time and expense as it is now finally finished and looking and driving like a like a new motor car.

It's one of the last 1993 models with 225,000km on the clock. The paint is 98% factory original other than some front spoiler stone chip restoration. I even managed to source some very rare new old stock Benz over mats and Bosch spot lights from Germany, and inner boot lid warning stickers are the icing on the cake! I also keep a set of original interior Zebrano wood trim kit just in case as I have carbon fibre covers on the original at the moment.

Happy days with my baby Benz. As you can see I am very proud of my little motor car and it is well pampered. I have spent an awful lot of time, effort and money but it was all worth every penny when I get in it out and take a drive.



1993 Mercedes 190E 1.8





Jack O'Brien *Club Editor*

CLUB NEWS

Plenty of variety at this year's Club Concours

The Club's annual Concours took place on 16th June this year and was one of the better attended Concours I have attended. The club and Mercedes Benz UK provided a brace of W116 450SEL 6.9s and two W100 600 saloons to park outside the main building at Milton Keynes. These really are extraordinary cars and to see several examples in one place was a rare treat. Club Members also had an early chance to see the new W464 G63 AMG before UK deliveries start. Still bold, large and boxy the Gelandewagen, while changed is certainly familiar in the flesh. Its facelifted appearance has been slightly divisive but, in the flesh, it really does appear much better than the press photos have suggested. Undoubtedly an improvement on the W463 it replaces, they won't be able to make them fast enough.

The competing classes at this year's event were well contested by a range of different models. SLs from W113 to R231 were on display, as well as numerous /8 models, Pontons and W108s. In the Enthusiast's Class, cars as current as a W205 C Class were in competition, however it must be observed that the classes are engineered such that cars are categorised based on age as well as body style, so a W205 wouldn't compete with a W115!

There was hot competition between two beautifully restored



"The classes are engineered such that cars are categorised based on age as well as body style."

W123 estates in the Concours d'Elegance; Andrew Lane's recently completed 280TE and Julie Gandolfi's 200T were pretty evenly matched but the 200T came out on top. W201s were well represented, with three Smoke Silver examples in the enthusiast class. Also in the enthusiast class was a really well presented W460 280GE SWB which looked delightfully original and a stark contrast to the W464 on display!

While the event itself was a great success, there is an ongoing degree of discontent within the club with regards to the publishing of scores. The winners and runners up of each class are announced on the day and the overall scores of all the cars are published in the club gazette

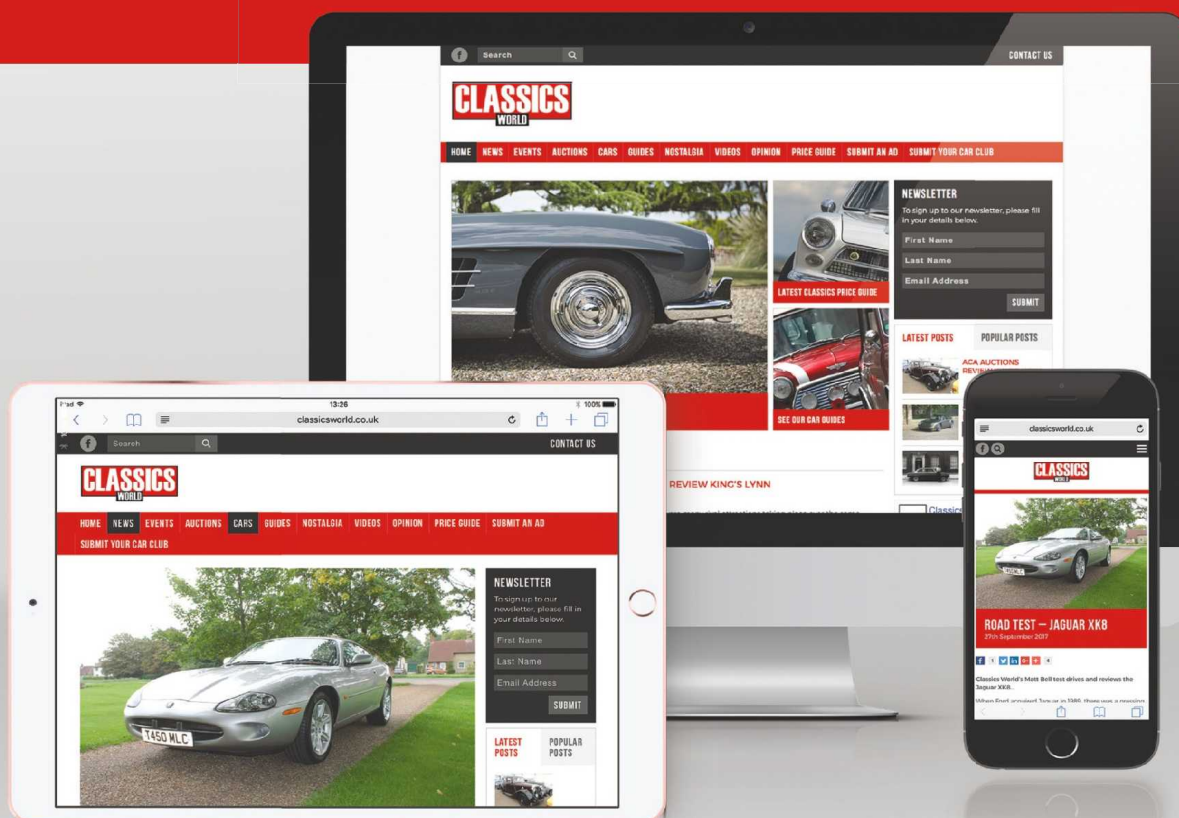


several months later. In principle, this should reduce complaints and disputes of scores, however many members see a lack of clarity in this system and feel that while the scores may be, they aren't able to gain insight as to where their car fell down and how they could do better next year. It has been called for, for a number of years, to be an item on the club's agenda but is seemingly put off every time. A change in the running of Concours or an amendment to the rules is unlikely, so it's best to attend Concours with that in mind. Your car will score what it'll score, whether it be a tidy C-Class, or a nut and bolt restored 190SL, the judges' decisions are final and any quibbling certainly won't be fruitful.

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C4500



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60 AMG



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1243

SL

300SL



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3168

320



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2895

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1567

SLK

SLK



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1555

200K



2008, 70,000 miles, £7,499. One keeper, with service history, automatic, power steering, power hardtop, electric windows, remote central locking, comes with 2 keys, ABS brakes, parking sensors, finished in benitoite blue/orient beige leather, wind deflector, electric folding mirrors, 5 spoke alloys, heated seats, aircarft - neck level heating, telephone pre wiring, lots of service bills from Mercedes garage, old MoT's and new vehicle invoice from new. Please call 07545 703474, Hampshire. (T)

230



1999, 130,000 miles, £875. Manual, MoT till end of May and full service history. Please call 01179 567144, (T).
2851

500



2003, £7,499. Convertible power, hard top, automatic, power steering, electric windows, remote central locking with 2 keys, heated/electric seats, alloy wheels, fitted with parking sensors, air conditioning, cruise control, air bag, leather interior, abs brakes, stereo and cd player, this vehicle has been owned by vendor for the last 28 1/2 years and comes with service history. Please call 07545 703474, Hampshire. (T)

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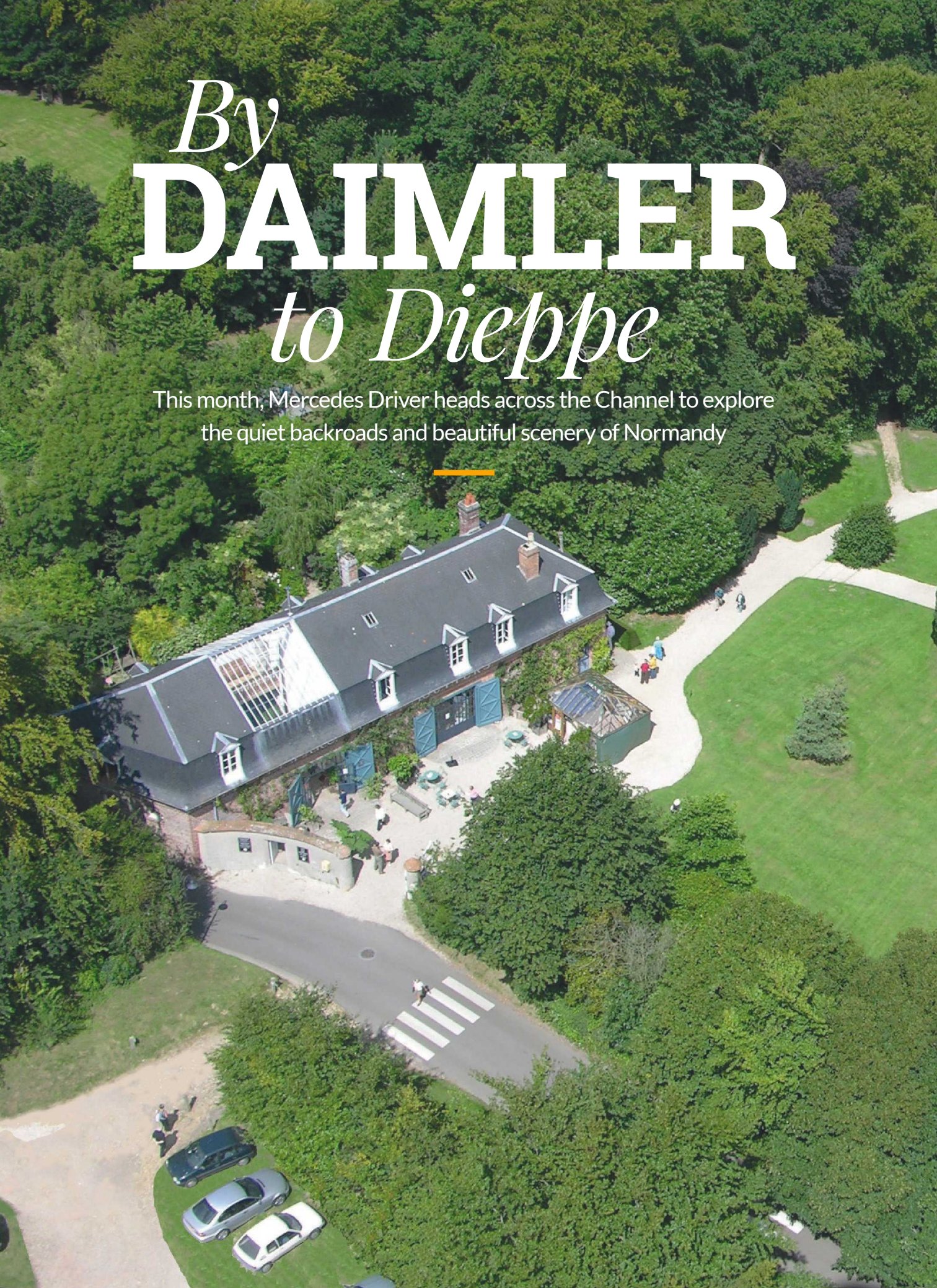
POA. Hard top mouldings, wing & door mouldings, sill mouldings (inner & outer), rear panel mouldings, "B" pillar chrome caps, door swan neck mouldings, calliper repair kits, outer door handles. Please call 01773 835462, Derbyshire.
1095

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POA. Air Louvre chrome grille surround, indicator switches (new), headlamps & cover, rear lamps, lenses, surrounds, rev counter, fuel gauge (used). Please call 01773 835462, Derbyshire.
1094

MERCEDES SL TROLLEY

£100-£150. For storage or hardtop, mine was 1997. Also Suzuki wagon R engine with drive shafts. Please call 07544 244739.
1152



By **DAIMLER** *to Dieppe*

This month, Mercedes Driver heads across the Channel to explore
the quiet backroads and beautiful scenery of Normandy







Classic Touring

Words and pics: Julian Parish

Additional pictures: DFDS Seaways, Le Bois des Moutiers, Jeremy Clarke, Andrew Noakes

If you're fed up with the gridlocked roads of southern England, why not head off for a few days and enjoy the open roads of France? September is a lovely time of year to visit areas like Normandy, and the 4-hour crossing with DFDS from Newhaven to Dieppe can cost as little as £110 for a 5-day return for a car with two passengers. We stayed in the spa town of Forges-les-Eaux, just 35 miles south of Dieppe and a great base to explore both the coast and countryside inland.

Our trip, in early June, was rather special, with the author's Mercedes 190E 2.6 leading a group of 20 classics taking part in this year's Guild of Motoring Writers Euro Classic. The absence of other Mercedes was more than made up for by the wonderful selection of other makes on the tour, ranging from a concours-winning 1958 Jaguar 3.4 saloon to a one-owner Alfa Romeo SZ. All the places we visited are open to the public.

DFDS' 9AM sailing from Newhaven arrives at Dieppe at 2PM local time, allowing plenty of time for a stop in the town or a leisurely drive down to Forges-les-Eaux. The direct route follows the D915 (formerly the Nationale 15) and takes barely an hour, but many in our group took a scenic detour along the D154 through the Forêt d'Eawy. This only adds 20 minutes or so to the journey but makes for a great introduction to the uncrowded forest roads of Normandy. We chose to stay at the same hotel for the entire weekend, and by 5.30 on Thursday evening everyone was safely checked in. The 4-star Forges Hôtel at Forges-les-Eaux proved a popular choice, with comfortable modern rooms, a generous buffet dinner and extensive leisure facilities. Rates for a double room start at €99 per night.

Forges-les-Eaux lies in the heart of the Pays de Bray, less well-known than the coastal areas further west, but one

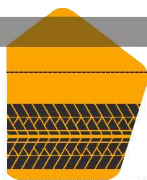


"Our trip, in early June, was rather special, with the author's Mercedes 190E 2.6 leading a group of 20 classics."

of the many unspoilt areas in northern France. More energetic travellers from the UK can follow the Avenue Verte, a cycle route which runs all the way from London to Paris and passes right through the Pays de Bray, but we were happy to enjoy the greater speed and comfort of our classics!

For our first full day in France, our itinerary took us through the backroads to the south of Forges-les-Eaux. Michelin's famous maps are unrivalled when it comes to plotting a route along France's byways, with roads bordered in green denoting

especially scenic routes. Map 304 covers the whole of the Eure and Seine-Maritime départements in this feature, at a scale of 1:150,000. Our first stop, about 20 miles from Forges-les-Eaux, was at the charming Château de Vascœuil in the Andelle valley. Its octagonal tower – with 107 steps leading to the top – dates all the way back to the 12th century, while the dovecote and many outbuildings now house temporary exhibitions of contemporary art. You can refuel with coffee and cake too, served in the park surrounding the château. A short drive along the D6 will bring you from Vascœuil to the village of Lyons-la-Forêt. With its half-timbered houses and covered market building, it's easy to imagine how it looked in the 17th century. There are plenty of cafés and restaurants around the main square where you can enjoy lunch outdoors or – for something rather grander – a Michelin-starred restaurant, La Licorne Royale. »



Classic Touring



Heading due south from Lyons-la-Forêt along the D2 and then the D1, our route after lunch took us through the villages of Lisors and Écouis—where we were met with the surreal sight of a camel from a visiting circus grazing beside the medieval church – and into the town of Les Andelys. Theroad from the town centre up to Château-Gaillard is well signposted: it is a steep climb with some lovely bends much enjoyed by the drivers of the sportier machines in our group, which included a Porsche 944 Turbo and Lotus Elan. (Any Mercedes SL would be a great choice too!) Château-Gaillard was built by Richard the Lionheart in 1196; today



you can clamber up to the castle ruins or simply take in the stunning views over the Seine. On the way down from the castle, we stopped off for a drink at the river's edge at Le Petit Andely, before retracing our steps through the forest to Forges-les-Eaux, a run home of about 35 miles. Coming out of Lisors, a short detour along the D715 will bring you to the Abbaye de Mortemer, a Cistercian abbey whose ruins go back to the 12th century.

Normandy offers a lovely mix of inland and coastal scenery, so for our second day's touring we headed back towards the sea. The D1314 leads north from Forges-les-Eaux, with



Neufchâtel-en-Bray the next main town en route. Saturday is market day there, so some members of our group took the chance to stock up on the heart-shaped local cheese. Others skirted around the town centre, stopping for coffee in one of the villages, eventually joining the D915 just before Pommereval, north of the A28 autoroute. Haring after fellow motoring writer John Simister in his enthusiastically driven Saab 96 two-stroke from 1961, the Mercedes was in its element: manually selecting third in the automatic gearbox held the engine nicely in its power band, while the multi-link rear suspension kept things tidy. From Pommereval,

"The two-tonne V1 rockets were launched along an inclined ramp with London firmly in their sights."

a small sign points along the D99 to Val Ygot, one of 400 launch sites for the German V1 and V2 rockets during World War 2. The two-tonne V1 rockets were launched along an inclined ramp – which has now been rebuilt, alongside some of the other buildings – with London firmly in their sights. Set amid the calm of the forest, the site is a sobering place to visit.

From Val Ygot there is a choice of several routes along generally well-surfaced roads towardsthe coast. We made for Varengeville, a small village just outside Dieppe, stopping there for a delicious lunch of home-made quiche, apple and walnut tart and local cider at Le



Piment Bleu, a quirky café and craft shop. From there it was a short drive up the road to Le Bois des Moutiers, for many the highlight of our trip. The estate is famed for its formal gardens conceived by Gertrude Jekyll and magnificent park overlooking the sea, planted with enormous rhododendrons, azaleas and maples. At its heart is the house designed by the British architect Edwin Lutyens for Guillaume Mallet in 1898; inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement, it is unique in France. If you can, join a group for the delightful guided tour of the house: available in English, these are conducted by Mallet's own granddaughter, Mary, who also laid out the beautiful rose garden.

With the afternoon drawing on, our group headed back to Forges-les-Eaux, a trip of just over 40 miles, again taking either the D915 (which has far fewer lorries at weekends) or the D154 through the forest. Don't forget that the speed limit on all main roads in France without a central divider was reduced from 90kph to 80kph (50mph) on July 1 this year and is strictly enforced, with ever more fixed speed cameras and even mobile cameras fitted to unmarked moving cars. The Essential Guide to Driving in Europe (from Veloce Publishing) will give you all the

"Don't forget that the speed limit on all main roads in France without a central divider was reduced from 90kph to 80kph (50mph) on July 1 this year and is strictly enforced.."

information you need for a safe and uneventful trip across the Channel.

The following morning, it was time to return to the DFDS ferry terminal at Dieppe, the midday departure allowing a final chance to buy some food and wine to bring home. The Mercedes performed faultlessly throughout the trip (of course!) and averaged about 29mpg. All the other classics made it safely home, with only minor glitches: a hydraulic leak on a Citroën DS, an erratic idle speed on a Ferrari F355 GTS and an intermittent electrical problem on the Saab 96. So why not follow our lead and take your Mercedes over to Normandy this autumn?



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