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I almost bought myself a W140 this month, having enjoyed my time spent with one writing the twin test in this issue. Lexus evidently had Mercedes in its sights with the LS400 – and Mercedes definitely upped the game with the S-class of the 1990s. Not only was it bigger than the previous model, but quieter, more comfortable and more imposing. As much as the W220 was a step forward, it lost some of the previous car's heft and was thus far less imposing than what to many is the greatest S-class of all time.

And, as images in this issue suggest, it made for an excellent if costly taxi. If you enjoyed Sam Mace's account of Mercedes' first 60 years in the private hire business, turn to page 18 – covering everything from the legendary Fintail through to the W210 E-class, he brings the story almost up to date with the second half of his account.

As ever – if you have any feedback for us, or if you'd like to see your car featured in these pages, please write to us at the contact address on page 15. We're keen to get you and your cars involved.



Sam Skelton Editor



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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.

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» NEWS

Rare SL Roadster headlines Silverstone Auction

An open-top version of the iconic 300SL is expected to be one of the stars of Silverstone Auctions' summer sale when it goes under the hammer next month.

The 1958 Mercedes 300SL Roadster will be sold during the Silverstone Classic – the world's biggest classic motor racing festival – which takes place on the 21st and 22nd July.

One of only 1,858 Roadsters ever built, this 300SL underwent a full restoration when it arrived in the UK in 1999.

The restoration was completed by Ron Waghorn, a Mercedes-Benz UK engineer and one of only two invited to Germany to be factory-trained on the 300SL from launch. It is being sold with an estimate of between £700,000 and £800,000.

"The 300SL Roadster is a timeless classic, as beautiful now as it was 60 years ago," said Nick Whale, managing director of Silverstone Auctions. "It has stood the test of time as one of the earliest and greatest race bred road cars. Its complex mix of engineering and beauty make it one of the most respected road going classics ever made so it is fitting that we have the pleasure to offer it at the Silverstone Classic in July."

The car was supplied new to the USA in 1958 and remained there until it was imported and sold to the current owner, a distinguished member of the British Racing Drivers Club, by Brian Classic.

On arrival in the UK in 1999, the 300SL was given a thorough restoration, with the engine and gearbox entrusted to Ron Waghorn, and ex-McLaren engineer Kerry Adams in charge of the metal fabrication for the body and



frame. Meanwhile the interior was accurately retrimmed in red leather by Morris McDonald. The restoration was completed in 2001 and an extensive photographic record of the process is included in the vehicle history file.

Since the restoration was completed, the car has covered a total of 9,000 miles across multiple countries, including Scotland,

France, Italy, Jordan and Monaco, bringing the total mileage to just over 89,000. Throughout this time, the car was maintained by Ron Waghorn until his retirement in 2007, with maintenance then being given to Tommy Johnston, the only other man invited to Germany to train on the 300SL at launch, until his retirement in 2011.

The car is now maintained by Neil Corns of Omega Motorsport who ensured the injection fuel pump was rebuilt last year at HK Engineering in Germany as part of its annual maintenance programme, at a cost of €13,800.

The car is finished in its original colour scheme of Cream with red leather and comes complete as a matching numbers car with its original engine, gearbox and rear axle.

NEWS



Mercedes brings older models into the digital age

Owners of older Mercedes-Benz models up to 16 years of age can now access a range of digital services thanks to an app developed by the manufacturer to integrate older cars with its current 'Mercedes me' software platform.

The Mercedes me adapter can be fitted to selected models dating as far back as 2002, including the W169 A-Class and W211 E-Class and is simple to install via the car's



OBD port. For a limited time, both the adapter – and the cost of fitting it – are completely free.

Once the adapter has been fitted, vehicle information can be accessed through the Mercedes me Adapter app on a smartphone, or by logging onto the Mercedes me portal on a computer.

Information includes fuel level and range, mileage, battery voltage, parking time, and when the next service is due. The app will also

automatically save the car's parking position, making it easier to find later.

The adapter saves previous trip information, providing the distance travelled and the route taken. Customers can book their next service via the app, while having access to relevant accident and breakdown numbers.

Sally Jones, Customer Services Director, Mercedes-Benz Cars UK, commented: "The Mercedes-Benz me Adapter gives more of our customers than ever before the opportunity to benefit from our Mercedes me service. The service connects our customers with their car, allowing them access to their most important vehicle information at the press of a button."

The adapter takes five minutes to fit and can be activated once the customer has created a Mercedes me account and the car has been linked to the account by a Mercedes-Benz Retailer.

To find out if your car is eligible, please visit: <https://www.mercedes-benz.co.uk/passengercars/being-an-owner/mercedes-me-adapter.html>

Mercedes Lightweight Brabus 190E

A one-off track-ready BRABUS-prepped Mercedes-Benz 190E is up for sale in Surrey, priced at a heady £131,995.

While that may sound a lot for a 190E, the 3.6S Lightweight is something very special indeed.

It's based on a BRABUS concept developed in the 1980s, which never saw production.

In 1988, the tuning firm showed its prototype Brabus 190E 3.6S, which had no air conditioning, rear seats or soundproofing, and a straight six engine bored out to 3.6-litres.

It was a bold move, but a step too far for even BRABUS customers, with no



retail customers interested in the hardcore lightweight option. As a result, the concept was converted into the first BRABUS 190E 3.6-24, with the seats and air con reinstalled.

Fast forward 20 years and Sven Gramm, PR Director for BRABUS, commissioned the

company to produce another one, staying true to the concept as a two-seater with no air conditioning. This was to be his personal car, as he recalled the original.

The build used a donor 190E 2.6E and took 10 months to build, with Gramm seeking out old blueprints and parts to create a car that was as true to the original as possible.

The fully road legal Lightweight has been part of Gramm's private collection since its completion in 2008 and is now for sale at Guildford-based Fast Classics - <http://www.fast-classics.com/cars/brabus-190e-3-6s-lightweight-for-sale/>

» NEWS

How Mercedes was an architect in Audi's success

This year sees an unusual anniversary for Mercedes-Benz, as it marks 60 years since the company took over a company that is today one of its closest rivals.

In 1958, Daimler-Benz became the majority shareholder of Auto Union, whose famous four-rings badge now adorns the bonnet of every Audi.

It's an alliance that would be seen as bizarre today, but after the Second World War, making a new start under completely different circumstances was not easy for either company.

Daimler-Benz continued to be based in Stuttgart. Auto Union relocated its headquarters from Chemnitz

to Ingolstadt. When the conditions normalised towards the end of the 1950s, major shareholder Friedrich Flick proposed an idea - as the two model ranges complemented each other, Daimler-Benz should acquire a majority shareholding in Auto Union.

The arrangement would be a short-lived one, with Daimler-Benz selling Auto Union to current owner Volkswagen in 1964, but it led to two significant developments.

For Daimler-Benz, it was the acquisition of a factory just outside Dusseldorf, which the company retains to this day and has become the global lead production plant for the Sprinter van, the very latest version of which has just gone into production.

Above: We covered the story of the W118/9 prototypes in the June 2018 issue

More intriguing, though, is the Mercedes influence of the Audi product range - much of the development of the Audi 100 C1, which made its debut in 1968, was carried out under the leadership of Mercedes lead engineer Ludwig Kraus, along with Audi's 1.8-litre petrol engine. Indeed, photos exist of a medium-sized Mercedes-Benz prototype that looked very similar to the Audi 100, should the technology have been developed for the Stuttgart-based brand instead.

Ultimately, then, Mercedes was an architect in Audi's success - one of the biggest ironies in motoring history, and a little known alliance that celebrates its diamond anniversary this summer.



BRABUS creates ultimate hardcore G-Class

Specialist Mercedes-Benz tuning firm BRABUS has created what it believes to be the most hardcore development of the iconic G-Class yet.

The GL Adventure 4x4² feature exclusive slate grey paint and is powered by a twin-turbo 4.0-litre V8, with 542bhp and 800Nm of torque. It's on-road performance is sensational, with 0-60mph in 6.4 seconds, though the top speed is electronically limited to 130mph thanks to the knobbly tyres. Power is delivered to all four wheels via a seven-speed automatic transmission.

Off-road adornments include twin



snorkels, a bonnet scoop, a heavy duty spare wheel carrier, headlamp protectors and

mesh fog lamp grilles to protect vulnerable areas when off-roading, while other bold features include a full-width LED light strip across the roof and rear spotlights, along with a heavy-duty full-length roof rack.

The GL Adventure 4x4² also comes with an integrated winch, while interior features include drilled pedals and red stitched detailing in the seat and dashboard leather, along with a large touchscreen central display.

The only downside is the price - a cool 540,215 Euros, or around £472,000 at the current exchange rate...

» NEWS

In Brief

Subscription services allows you to drive as many Mercedes models as you like

A new subscription service has been launched by Mercedes-Benz USA, which proposes to change the face of new car buying.

Instead of choosing one particular model, subscribers can pay between \$1,095 and \$2,995 per month and drive as many new Mercedes models as they like – if the sun comes out, they can pick an E-Class convertible, or if they need to venture off-road, they can pick up a G-Class.

The new 'Signature' service is being trialled in two US states – Philadelphia and Tennessee – with a view to launching globally if it proves popular.

New EV factory to open in France

Daimler is investing 500 million Euros into a new production facility in Hambach, France, to start building a new compact electric model for Mercedes-Benz.

The new factory will build a production model of the EQA EV concept previewed at last year's Frankfurt Motor Show, where it will be built alongside the electric Smart ForTwo.



Restoration specialist gets global investment boost

One of the UK's most respected classic Mercedes specialists has received a multi-million pound investment from a private equity firm, which will allow it to promote its restoration services in even more global markets.

Cardiff-based Hemmels specialises in the restoration of classic post war Mercedes-Benz sports cars for clients around the world, with some selling for more than £1m. The company sells classic Mercedes-Benz sports cars rebuilt as new from a carefully sourced stock of base vehicles.

Its SL sports cars carry a full warranty and are commissioned by customers across four continents and are hand-crafted to their exact requirements so that each car is unique.

The business has secured a multi-million pound investment from Mobeus Private Equity, which in return has taken an undisclosed minority equity stake in the business. With Mobeus capital, Hemmels says it will scale up its engineering and research and development capability, as well as its global marketing activities.

Its workforce, currently 50, is also

expected to grow, both at its base in Cardiff and at a new Hemmels US service and sales centre that will open in Los Angeles later this year.

The business opened its doors in 2016, when chief executive Jon Curley teamed up with technical director Joseph Sullivan and two other partners to take Mr Sullivan's existing garage and restoration business to a new level.

Curley is an experienced entrepreneur with a successful track record in software and biotech. Sullivan is an engineer who trained in the aerospace industry.

Curley said: "We were presented with many offers from private equity and venture capital houses, however, the Mobeus team's enthusiasm for the company and track record of success made them our clear preference.

"We're excited to be accelerating our growth plans with an accomplished partner who genuinely shares our vision and commitment to build a global brand."

The Mercedes-Benz world museum at Brooklands motor racing circuit in Weybridge, Surrey, will feature a Hemmels restoration in its atrium this summer.

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MERCEDES SL500 1999

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This R129 is exceptionally well specified and comes with a FSH and every MoT from new.
A low mileage example in faultless condition throughout.

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Mercedes CL55 AMG 2003

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Mercedes C43 AMG 1998

83,303 miles
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£14,995



MERCEDES 190E 1.8 1992

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MERCEDES CL500 2004

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Letters

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The future sounds bleak...

I love Mercedes; my A209 CLK350 cabriolet is a great pleasure to drive, especially on warm summer days. Top down, listening to the magnificent petrol-powered V6 in Sport setting takes some beating.

I have no doubt oil-burning diesels are more economic, and that electrification is the future, but I am making the most of the twilight of a golden age, when driving can still be fun.

In George Orwell's "1984", the telescreen cannot be turned off. It may surprise some of your readers to learn that COMAND can.

Go where your heart takes you before GPS conveys us all, joylessly, from A to B.

You and your Mercedes can be winners if you regard your car as a

thoroughbred to be cosseted and not a mere workhorse.

Christopher Floyd, Wiltshire

The Price Is Right

Hi, loved the new magazine. Great read. Well done. Enjoyed the 'Buying Your First Mercedes' article. I've been in touch with my classic car insurance company to get an agreed value set accordingly. Can I ask how you valued the models?

Julian Carter, by email

Ed – Thank you for your letter Julian. We take our values from a combination of cars sold at auction, cars advertised for sale online and in our classifieds. While we know this isn't perfect, it is as close to a fair and representative cross-section as we can get.

Above:

Christopher
Floyd loves his
CLK350

Smart planning

I'd like to thank you for the feature on Smarts you ran a couple of issues ago. There are a lot of Mercedes enthusiasts who dismiss these small cars, and it's nice to see that one magazine still embraces them as examples of the Mercedes family even if they don't wear the three pointed star. I've had a Roadster for over ten years, and my wife has run Forfours and Fortwos during that time as well. We've just replaced our last Forfour with a four year old A-class – which we felt was a logical step up. What a pity Smart never made the bigger ForMore concept car!

James Thorpe, Coventry

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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.**



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, o/g, 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, Comand radio/single CD/ SatNav/CD Changer/hands free telephone etc 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, Blaupunkt radio/cassette. A stunning example. **£34,950.**



300 SL, 1990G, 3 owners, 4 speed auto, 87,000 miles, fmbsh, astral silver, grey leather, black soft top, factory fitted hard top, heated seats, cruise control, illuminated vanity mirrors, o/g, Blaupunkt radio/cassette. Show condition. **£29,950.**



E320 Coupe, 1996N, 5-speed auto, 63,000 miles, fmbsh, ruby red metallic, mushroom leather, factory aircon, cruise, electric sunroof, o/g, headlamp wash/wipe, infrared locking, Mercedes exquisite radio/cassette. A very nice original car. **£13,950.**



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. Blaupunkt radio/cassette. Large history file with original LE certificate. **£7,950.**



SL 500, 2003/03, 5-speed auto/tiptronic, 29,000 miles, fmbsh, brilliant silver metallic, red leather, electric roof, climate, cruise, electric steering column, electric heated & ventilated memory seats with lumbar support both sides, ESP, Comand with single CD/radio/SatNav/mobile hands free etc etc. A really top example **£14,950.**



500 SL, 1985B, 4-speed auto, 51,000 miles, fmbsh, astral silver, grey sports check cloth, black soft top, factory fitted hard top, factory aircon, cruise, rear seats, headlamp wash/wipe, Blaupunkt radio/cassette. The best you will drive. **£29,950.**



500 SL, 1986D, 4-speed auto, 59,000 miles, fmbsh, pajett red metallic, mushroom leather, original black soft top, factory fitted hard top, factory aircon, cruise, heated orthopaedic seats, rear seats, o/g, headlamp wash/wipe, Blaupunkt radio/cassette. Just serviced and ready to go. **£49,950.**



500 SEC, 1988E, 4-speed auto, 60,000 miles, fmbsh, smoke silver metallic, navy leather, factory climate control, cruise, electric steering column, electric sunroof, electric seats with driver's memory, headlamp wash/wipe. A very proper example. **£17,950.**



500 SL, 1980W, 4-speed auto, 10,000 miles, fmbsh, light ivory, dark brown leather, dark brown soft top, factory fitted hard top, factory aircon, cruise, rear seats, headlamp wash/wipe. A very rare find. **£59,950.**

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UPFRONT



Hire and **REWARD**

Sam Mace charts the recent history of the Mercedes taxi



Warum nach Hause?



Mercedes Taxis

Words:
Sam Mace

Ponton production ended in late 1962, with the "Fintail" 110 series left to fill its shoes. The Fintail had already been in production almost a year before the Ponton production ceased, and the most obvious difference between the two was the somewhat American-looking treatment of the newer car's rear end, adding a little glamour to taxi ranks across the world.

In many ways the Fintail picked up where the Ponton left off. Not only did it have more style than the Ponton, but more practicality. Its doors were wider, and opened out further which made it more user friendly than the Ponton, as well as boasting greater interior space, more comfort and a yet bigger boot.

Like its forebears the Fintail was offered as a diesel. On launch, the 190D moniker remained, as did the OM 621 engine. The 190D would last until 1965, when it was usurped by the 200D. It benefitted from a new five bearing crank shaft in place of the original three, as well as better sound insulation and an increased top speed of 81mph. The 200D focused on usability and refinement, rather than raw performance - the power output of 55hp was unchanged from the old 190D and 0-60 still took a glacial 28 seconds.

But perhaps of most interest to the taxi driver was the availability of an automatic diesel. With the increased refinement offered by the 200D, and the option of an automatic gearbox, the W110 matured into a sophisticated and highly usable car. It was here that the modern Mercedes taxi was born - not only economical and durable, but smooth and refined, too.

But an even bigger departure, not only for Mercedes, but for the landscape of Germany's taxi ranks as a whole was on the way with the Stroke 8. The first production Mercedes to use semi-trailing arm rear suspension, it was a far better handling car than its predecessors, which rode just as well.

As before, the taxi market were catered for with strong, economical diesel engines, but this time a wider range of diesel units were offered.

On launch it was available as a 200D, using the four cylinder OM615 engine which made 55bhp. A 220D was also offered to, using the same OM615 unit as the 200D, with a slightly increased stroke that upped the power to a heady 59bhp. More choice for diesel drivers would be introduced later in the cars life. This included a four cylinder 240D that arrived in 1973, and the more exotic 240D 3.0 which used the five cylinder OM617 that came a year later.

Changes to German taxi legislation during the Stroke 8's production life meant that taxi businesses would be ordering their cars during a change over period.

At the time of the Stroke 8's launch, it was mandatory for all German taxis to have a glass screen between passenger and driver. The purpose of this divide was to protect the driver from attack. But it had become a hot topic for debate for German



"In many ways the Fintail picked up where the Ponton left off. Not only did it have more style than the Ponton, but more practicality."

taxi drivers, with many seeing a pane of glass behind their heads as a danger in an accident. In 1969, the regulation was overturned, and the divides were gradually phased out.

In 1971 regulation changed again, doing away with the chic black colour scheme that Germany's government required taxis to be painted in, and introducing the frumpier cream that we're familiar with today. The government cited visibility worries for dark cars in poor weather as their reasons for change.

If the Mercedes faithful were worried that all these developments were to the detriment of durability, they needn't have been. 1976 saw the introduction of the Stroke 8's replacement - the W123; available from launch with a brace of diesels carried over from the W115 - but extensively reworked.

Of most interest to the taxi operators would be an increase in ease of servicing. One result of Mercedes' reworking of »







Mercedes Taxis

the diesel engines was faster, easier oil changes, which meant servicing turnaround time was quicker and downtime was reduced.

Right from its launch, demand for the new car was strong, stronger than even Mercedes themselves had predicted.

Mercedes soon discovered that its production forecasts were hugely pessimistic, and it wasn't able to keep pace with demand. This created something akin to a W123 black market in Germany. Used examples could be worth up to 5,000 DMs more than brand new ones, a figure many were willing to pay to avoid having their name stuck on a twelve month waiting list for a brand new W123.

Of course, coach builders offered something that was becoming a time-honoured tradition - the stretched limousine version of the workaday Mercedes. Previously, they'd been making coach built estates, too, but now Mercedes itself would begin producing them - but not until 1977.

Wearing the "T" suffix on the tailgate, the S123 may have been a long time coming, but it was significant. Mercedes estates have been often been associated with antique dealers and people who wear mustard coloured trousers, going into the countryside to shoot things. But in truth, there were highly regarded as taxis, too. Now the cabby who was asked to carry a pram or a bicycle could oblige.

The W123, and those that came before it had become such a dominant force in the taxi sector, all over the world, Mercedes were probably started to take it for granted. They could offer you a proven diesel powerplant mated to a near indestructible body, backed up by a large and efficient service network. Any manufacturer looking at Mercedes's success in the sector with envious eyes was probably wondering what it would take to knock the three pointed star off its pedestal.

What it nearly did to shake that reputation amounted to good old fashioned self sabotage in 1985, when it launched the W123's replacement, the W124. To avoid becoming a victim of it's own success as it had done when launching the outgoing model, Mercedes did all it could meet demand for the new car. In order to get as many cars off the assembly as possible, Mercedes took on new, less experienced assembly line staff. This resulted in a drop of a built quality.

The results: a PR headache. Many of the taxi drivers and operators who had given up their W123s and replaced them with the W124 were so disgusted with the drop in build standards, they took to the streets and protested. This though, was a blip, not a catastrophe. Once Mercedes had resolved problems on the production line, the W124 went on to be yet another highly successful taxi.

Quality may not have been up to Mercedes' normal standards from the start, but the alphabet soup on the bootlid was. Complimenting the wide choice of petrol engines, was the trusty four cylinder 200D option, now offering 72 bhp. The five cylinder 250D returned, joined by the ground-breaking 300D, which was the first straight six

diesel Mercedes passenger car.

And if you did order one to put to work as a taxi, it would come with many thoughtful little changes designed to make life easier. In the past taxi spec would have included things like the glass divider, a radio and a taxi meter. The W124's taxi kit was a little more thorough.

In the back, the doorcards were altered so not to include door pockets, meaning there was one less space for people to put things and then leave them behind. So there was no leaving your passport behind at the airport in a W124, and no rummaging around for lost property at the end of the driver's shift.

Now sought after by some W124 aficionados is the little pivoting map light fitted to front of taxis, between the two sun visors. It wasn't an attractive add-on, but it was typical of the thoughtful little touches Mercedes have always been so good at - such as the driver knee operated panic alarm under the steering column.

"There was no leaving your passport behind at the airport in a W124, and no rummaging around for lost property at the end of the driver's shift."

Two different styles of meter were available: one was mounted atop the dashboard and looked like something from bad 1980s sci-fi. The other option was a glovebox lid mounted meter. The latter needed a specially adapted glove-box lid to fit the meter to, making the glove box itself unusable and leaving behind a strange indentation if the taxi was ever decommissioned for private use.

Mercedes's solution was inelegant, if logical: simply throw a normal lid in the boot to install in the future, before it left the factory.

A optional extra for the taxi spec W124 was extra hard wearing full length rubber floor covering, designed to mimic the iconic ribbed Mercedes fabric mats in appearance. Even more rubber would be needed by the taxi operator who had opted for the stretched version.

Since the days of the Ponton, there had been a slow, albeit steady demand for stretched 7 seater Mercedes taxis. Mercedes were quite happy to let independent coach



Mercedes Taxis

builders take care of these needs, and worked alongside them well. Squeezing low volume, specialist cars into its production schedule would never be viable, or justifiable to Mercedes.

But as air travel became cheaper and more popular in the late '60s, the demand for these 7 seater mutants for airport work steadily increased, and Mercedes began to take a more active role in the niche. The advent of the W124 saw a semi-factory stretched version come on stream. The limousines started life as TE models, rolling out of Sindelfingen before going to the Bremen plant to be adapted. At Bremen the roof cant rails and floorpan were stretched, before going to the coach builders minus the rear doors and tailgate. Once there, the mutilated estates would be converted to saloon configuration. This may have seemed like a topsy-turvy way of doing it, but the limousines had to start off this way. TEs had self levelling suspension, which was required for the extra weight the limousines would bear.

Meanwhile, numbers of Mercedes taxis continued to flourish outside of Germany. "Taking a taxi" invariably meant "taking a Mercedes", throughout much of Europe, The Mediterranean The Middle East and Africa. The majority of these cars found their way to more arid climes once their European owners were finished with them - often still in their taxi livery and complete with the light box mounted on the roof.

W115s, W123s and once they began to filter down into the export market, W124s soon carpeted taxi ranks in almost every developing country on the planet for decades, in many cases unhindered by pesky things like safety regulations and emissions controls.

One notable case of Mercedes taxis totally taking over, is Morocco. In the 1990s and early 2000s importing old Mercedes to Morocco (specially W123 240Ds) became a lucrative venture.

So insatiable was Morocco's appetite for W123s, in 2014 the government estimated that a staggering 55,000 W123 taxis were still in use throughout the country.

Like all non-indigenous populations that have been allowed to get out of control, the aging Mercedes population had to be culled. A scrappage scheme was rolled out in 2014, giving Moroccan taxi drivers a large cash incentive to scrap their Mercedes taxis and replace them with MPVs. Four years later, the once ubiquitous W123 taxi in Morocco has all but disappeared.

With the clouds of Dieselgate still looming, and a world wide obsession to improve air quality, it's likely that many more old Mercedes taxis will follow, if they haven't already.

It might be sad, but Mercedes can be proud that the only thing that can kill their old taxis is a scrappage scheme.

Many would argue that the passing of the W124 marked the end of a golden era for Mercedes, and that the W210 that replaced it was a mere shadow of what came before. Where the W124 had been designed from an engineer's perspective, the W210 had been designed with saving money

Right: Long wheelbase W124 made an ideal airport taxi.



"The taxi business stayed faithful to the three pointed star, not just in Germany, but all over the world."

in mind. In terms of keeping costs down, Mercedes were successful. The W210 was 20% cheaper than the W124 to manufacture, but quality nose-dived. As part of a wider cost-saving regime, Mercedes began to use cheaper steel, which meant catastrophic rot devoured the cars, often before their tenth birthday. Suspension turrets rotted through, causing the front suspension to collapse, wings, doors, bootlids and floors all corroded at an alarming rate. This was a far cry from its products from the 50s and 60s that were still pounding the streets up to fifty decades later.

Yet the taxi business stayed faithful to the three pointed star, not just in Germany, but all over the world. Despite the corrosion issues, many can still be seen plying their trade in Europe and beyond - over twenty years since their introduction. As W123s and W124 got harder and more expensive to get hold of, some developing economies are turned to the W210 as transport for the masses. Some taxi drivers are reporting their cars reaching over half a million miles, mostly reached in old diesels made before the switch to common rail units in 1998.

As the supply of cheap W123 and W124s start to dry up, it's not just W210s left to fill the void. Now cheap and easier to come by, even the W140 hasn't escaped the rigors of the taxi rank - although the UK was denied them, diesel W140s make an imposing and dignified taxi.



Pretender to **THE CROWN**

Lexus tried to beat the S-Class at its own game with the LS400.
But which luxury saloon is best?



Thirty five years ago, Toyota set into motion a plan to create the best luxury car in the world – one which would not only best Rolls-Royce, but topple even the mighty Mercedes S-class from its throne. The project, known as F1 (for Flagship 1), took six years to develop, and was launched in 1989 as the Lexus LS400.

But Mercedes hadn't been caught napping. Yes, its flagship S-class was now nearing a decade and was overdue for replacement – but the reason the new

W140 S-class hadn't been launched is because it was cementing its position at the top of the tree before its launch. Jaguar and BMW had V12 engines available in their liners, and Mercedes didn't see why it should miss out – the launch of the W140 was delayed by two years while V12 development was finalised. The S Class which emerged in 1991 represented the very best Mercedes could do – a worthy challenger to the Japanese newcomer.

But which was best? We've found an early LS400 and its closest Mercedes rival – let battle commence.







LS400 v W140

Words: Sam Skelton

A New Challenge

Launched in 1989, the LS400 was the culmination of six years' hard work by Toyota to produce the best car in the world. The Lexus brand was all-new, created to take on the Germans, Jaguar and Cadillac primarily in the US market. Sales were strong – for fifteen of the marque's first seventeen years, it became America's best-selling luxury car brand. The first decade or so was down to the popularity of the LS400 model; Toyota's first attempt at an internationally popular large saloon. 1.7 million miles of testing by 1400 engineers and several thousand further support staff meant that by the time development work was frozen in 1986, there was nothing out there to rival the Lexus as a luxury proposition.

Broadly speaking there are three eras of LS400 – 1989-1994, 1994-1997 and 1997-2000. Each became more advanced than the last, though it's early cars like this which demand the most money now. All were powered by derivatives of the same 4.0 V8 engine in differing

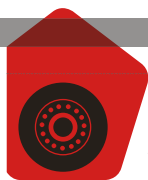
"The Lexus brand was all-new, created to take on the Germans, Jaguar and Cadillac."

states of tune, from 250bhp to 286bhp (Conveniently, the limit under Japanese tax laws), and all used four or five speed automatic gearboxes. There was one wheelbase and, ostensibly, one model – although options were available to personalise your Lexus.

Not so long ago £1000 might have got you an LS400. But the last three years or so have seen values strengthen, and it's fairly hard to get anything usable for under £2500. If you want one of the best MK1s like our test car, bank on spending about twice that now.

How does it drive?

The dashboard is the first thing to grab your attention in here – and it's alarming. A wholly digital readout might have been how the Japanese did business in the late 1980s, but it's an alien world to those used to sober-suited S classes, 7-series and Jags. The plastics look low key too – compared to that triumvirate the interior of the Lexus could almost belong to a Camry or a Corolla, albeit one with lots of toys. Performance is adequate for its size, but the alarming thing about how the Lexus drives is that it handles almost as well as a Jaguar – an alarming feat for a car in this class. And it does it so silently you could be forgiven for wondering if the engine was on at all. It's a very pleasant thing to drive – and for many, that plus its technological competence would be more than enough to earn it a victory.



LS400 v W140

The Old Guard

By the time the W140 S-class came out in 1991, Lexus had stolen a march on its German competitor. While the W126 still had healthy sales there was no denying the fact that it looked and felt out of date when compared to the Mercedes. The W140 would change all that – meeting Lexus’s technological tour de force head on, with such gadgets as double glazing, self closing doors, and air suspension on the more expensive models. It catered for performance and economy needs that the Lexus ignored too, with V12 and straight six options to complement the big V8s.

Subjectively, the S-class was felt by many to be the best car in the world, especially in V12 form. It may not have been the most crushingly perfect car in objective terms, but it was imposing, authoritative, powerful, comfortable and better equipped than anyone could have imagined possible in 1991. Plus it had “that”

badge – and as far as brand cachet goes, there is little to trump “Mercedes-Benz S-class”. Coveted by CEOs and treasured by tycoons, it has now become one of the most collectible modern classics from the Mercedes-Benz range. Available with 2.8 and 3.2-litre straight sixes, 4.2 and 5.0 V8s, and a colossal 6.0 V12, the S-class was available in two lengths and with such an array of optional and standard features it was difficult to find two the same. For those scraping onto the S-class ladder there were solid colours, manual gearboxes and steel wheels, while for plutocrats there was a long wheelbase SEL version with alloy wheels, and heated electric seats.

After some time in the doldrums W140 S-class values are strengthening, with really nice V8s and V12s nudging close to the £10000 mark. Half that will get a more than presentable example, while just £2000 will get you a nice S280 or middling S320. »

How does it drive?

There’s no escaping the size of a W140, especially from behind the wheel. Make no mistake, this is a big car, and as such there’s a lot of weight to hustle about. That’s why, despite an extra 30bhp and 200cc, the Mercedes is no quicker than the LS400. When you try to change direction quickly, that makes itself felt – though it’s more agile than its size suggests and a definite step above its predecessor. The interior is a model of sobriety as befits any S-class, though the somewhat vivid green of our test car takes some getting used-to. Despite Mercedes’ efforts with the double glazing, self closing doors and thick seals, it’s not quite as quiet in here as it was in the Lexus. Make no mistake, it’s good – it’s just not quite perfect. Somehow though, it manages to retain that separate, special air that the Lexus lacks – this is a car which smacks of aspiration and ambition above mere technical competence. That means it makes you feel good. That makes it a great classic.







Conclusion


As hard as it is to admit that the Mercedes concedes defeat, it really does in this company. When Toyota set out to produce the best car in the world, they succeeded. The Lexus is, by any objective definition, a better car than the Mercedes. It is no smaller inside, yet is more wieldy to drive. It's no slower, nor does it drink more. And nowadays, the Mercedes is a more valuable classic making the Lexus better value.

And yet, the Mercedes is the one we'd rather own. The problem with

"The Lexus is, by any objective definition, a better car. And yet the Mercedes is the one we'd like to own."

creating the best car in the world, with setting targets to exceed and doing so, is that you end up creating

something that does a very good job of being a car, but which is hard to love. The fact the Mercedes is a little too big, a little unwieldy, and isn't quite as objectively perfect, means that there is more in it to love.

It's not only that, either. When you are buying a car in this class, emotion plays a big part. While many might have grown up dreaming of the day they could own an S-class, we'd like to bet that relatively few grew up dreaming of a posh Toyota. So while the Lexus is the better car, our vote goes to the Benz. 

Thanks

Our thanks to London James for supplying the 400SE used in our photographs, and to John Kingsford for providing his Lexus LS400.



Alternative choice

So the sterility of the Lexus isn't your thing, but you're not sure about the Mercedes either? Why not go the other way – a Jaguar XJ is an emotive purchase, and one which drives really well. Between them, these positives can offset the Jaguar's hopeless space inefficiency, and quality which neither matches the Germans nor Japanese. The Jag's the cheapest of our 1990s contenders though, with prices starting well below £1000.



| THE FACTS | Lexus LS400 | Mercedes 400SE |
|-----------|------------------|------------------|
| Engine | 3969cc, V8, DOHC | 4196cc, V8, DOHC |
| Power | 250bhp @ 6500rpm | 282bhp @ 5700rpm |
| Torque | 260bhp @ 4400rpm | 302bhp @ 3900rpm |
| Max Speed | 155mph | 152mph |
| 0-60 | 7.9sec | 7.9sec |

There are potential concerns with both the W140 and the LS400 from a buying perspective. On the whole these are safe investments though, watch out for past bodes and you will be OK.



Buying an LS400

The timing belt is a weak link on these engines – not because it's a weak item but because replacement is an involved and lengthy task. There should be a sticker by the radiator indicating when this was last changed – if not, budget to have it done and negotiate accordingly. The interval is 100000 miles, but

with all these cars approaching two decades old and more it would be wise to replace any original belts left on cars. Dealer service history is the best bet – but the job will cost upwards of £500. Power steering pumps can leak, and the oil contamination will eventually kill the alternator. This isn't a nice job, so check the pump carefully for signs of any leaks.

Front balljoints are known to be weak, likewise front wheel bearings and springs. The latter can snap without warning. As you'd expect, suspension bushes that creak aren't right in a Lexus – and should be replaced. Worn boot seals can lead to pooling in the spare wheel well – it's not catastrophic but it means a seal will be necessary.



Buying an W140

Check the wiring looms on pre 1996 cars, they're prone to the infamous degradation issues and so ideally you should look at car with receipts for new looms and their fitment. Failing that, look at post 1996 cars and be prepared to haggle on earlier ones. W140s are relatively good for rust, but the front

wings are known trouble spots. Wheelarches can let go, and oddly they're prone to rust around the boot lock.

Check cars fitted with Adaptive Damping to ensure that the system works – there should be an appreciable difference between Comfort and Sport modes. Lacquer can split on the wood, and LCD panels on the dashboard can begin to bleed. We have seen

instances where the instrument clusters can fail, though these are repairable if they let go so shouldn't stop you from buying an otherwise good example. Likewise, perished vacuum pipework can interfere with the self-closing door mechanisms or with the central locking – it's easy enough to replace if you can find the leak, but that may take time.

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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

Finished in rare B91 Alexandrite Green with 0235A Beige Napa Leather. In absolutely stunning condition, this is a rather special, very low mileage high spec example of the incredible, and now becoming sought after C140 S-Class Coupe.

£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 it's 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.

£7995

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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**



SLK320 Roadster 2001/51

Sapphire Blue met, blue/black leather, 5-Sp auto, climate, cruise/limiter, elec seats, leather steering wheel and gearknob, orig 5 spoke AMG alloys, FSH, **ONLY 12,000m £11,950**



E320 Sportline Cabriolet 1996N

Azurite Blue metallic, grey leather, blue soft top, 5 speed auto, cruise, airbags, heated seats, wood/ leather steering wheel, original Sportline 15" alloys, FSH, 81,000m **£14,450**



230TE Estate 1989G

Blue/Black metallic, grey leather interior, Zebrano wood, 4-Sp auto, 4 x elec windows, elec sunroof, cruise, htd seats, two owners (latest since 1yr old), mega history, 172,000m . . **£6,450**



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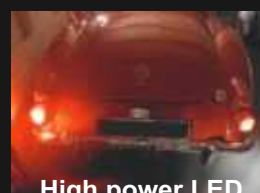
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The 600 was the very best Mercedes could offer for almost two decades. **Andrew Roberts** tells its story





"The W100 was guaranteed
to exude pomp and
circumstance."





Mercedes 600

Words:
Andrew Roberts

As a film, *The Magic Christian* was somewhat of a curio, a tail-end Swinging London vehicle for Peter Sellers, with several intriguing cars on display – a Checker Aerobus, a police Jaguar S-Type and a 1965 Mercedes-Benz 600 Pullman. The last named was allegedly the property of one Richard Starkey, aka the film's co-lead Ringo Starr, and it dominated every moment of its screen time, existing in another world from the Morris LD GPO vans, Austin 1100s and other mundane vehicles.

Cinema is a logical starting point when discussing the 600 as for many Britons it is a form of Mercedes-Benz that you are more likely to encounter on the screen than in the car park of Sainsburys. From *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* to *The Witches of Eastwick*, the W100 was guaranteed to exude pomp and circumstance and, quite frequently, menace while you might also glimpse it in news bulletins concerning the great, the good and the notorious. The 600 made its debut in late 1963 and when it ceased production in June 1981 after 2,677 units it was associated with Leonid Brezhnev, Idi Amin, Enver Hoxha (the world's most notorious Norman Wisdom fan) and Chairman Mao. Owners of a less ghastly nature included George Harrison, John Lennon, Elvis Presley and Elizabeth Taylor.

Thus, it is wholly understandable why visitors to the 1963 Frankfurt Motor Show were mesmerised by the 600. Imagine if you had arrived in your second-hand VW Beetle with its six-volt electrical system and then saw a car that Daimler-Benz intended to take up their 'pre-war tradition of the company which was to have at least one model which would be included whenever ultra-prestige cars were considered'. This was the automotive embodiment



"Such was the impact of the W100 that certain chaps at Rolls-Royce were worried."

of the German economic miracle, one with the new 6.3 litre SOHC Bosch mechanical fuel-injected V8 engine powering nearly 2 ½ tons of Mercedes-Benz to a top speed of 125 mph.

Such was the impact of the W100 that certain chaps at Rolls-Royce were allegedly heard to mutter that its technology was 'doomed to fail' in comparison with the Silver Cloud's redoubtable drum brakes and separate chassis. If PAS and automatic transmission as standard equipment were now par for the course for such a car in the early 1960s, the all-disc braking with

separate circuits and the self-levelling air suspension that allowed the 600 to be elevated over poorly surfaced roads was definitely not. Then there was the hydraulic operation of the adjustment of the front and rear seats, door locks, boot lid, fuel filler cap and side-windows plus shock absorbers that could be controlled by the driver. Above all, this was a very large motor car; neither the 1957-1962 W189 300D nor the W112 300SE were exactly lightweights but the W100 looked as neo-brutalists as a new office block. There was no deliberate harking back to a mythical "heritage" with the 600; Daimler-Benz claimed, with a refreshing lack of false modesty, that their new flagship's 'refinement, advanced design, safety and extraordinary comfort have no equal'.

Full production commenced in September 1964 with a long list of models to suit your pocket, personal needs, ego or how many of your loyal subjects had the desire to take a pot shot at you. The 3,200mm wheelbase saloon was available with or without an electrically operated division and was aimed at the magnate who wished to take the wheel on a regular basis. For those »



Mercedes 600

times when the chauffeur returned to duty, there were curtains on the rear screen for extra privacy, but the owner would be depriving his or herself of an unforgettable experience. After all, who could resist driving a Mercedes-Benz that was 'Peerless in performance', the publicity also reassuring the well-heeled motorist that this noble car incorporates every conceivable feature important to passenger comfort and safety'.

The great John Vary Bolster of Motor Sport magazine tested a saloon in November 1965 and his report was studded with such phrases as 'the ultimate in luxury motoring' and 'What is even more impressive is the handling and braking of this 2.5-ton car. Both are out of this world'. He concluded that 'If you invest your money thus you will own the most advanced motor-car in the world, a splendid example of Daimler-Benz engineering at its highest pinnacle'. Of course, with a UK list price of £8,926 (or more than 17 times the price of a Mini), the 600

"Its UK list price of £8,926 was more than 17 times the price of a Mini."

was very much a car in the Beatles/Sellers class although Bolster reported that there were already 30 in the country.

Across the Pond Road & Track evaluated the short wheelbase W100 and pointed out that for \$20,500 'you could get a Lincoln Continental, a Buick Riviera, two Pontiac GTOs and still have enough change left over for two and a half or three Volkswagens'.

As for its dimensions, 'because the mind's eye is not accustomed to such grand dimensions, it takes a while to encompass it in the mind ... like a statue that is larger than life. Or a cathedral'. And indeed, the W100 was imposing but never grandiose in the manner of certain Cadillacs and Lincolns while anyone who was in need of even more formal transport was offered the 3,900mm wheelbase seven-seater Pullman. This, to quote the brochure, could be specified with:

a choice of either four doors with two backward-facing seats in the rear, or six doors with two forward-facing folding seats in the rear. The two latter choices are offered principally to meet the needs of heads of state, industry and other people of eminence having considerable public responsibilities.

I.e. plebs need not apply, especially as it cost £9,994 in the UK. Even more exclusive, if that were possible, was the Laundette, which was available in »









Mercedes 600

various configurations of doors and hood length. As Daimler-Benz themselves have noted, it is probably impossible to find two identical 600s, such as the myriad of body styles and special equipment options from the sliding roof to a Becker radio, with upholstery in cloth, velour, Bedford cord or leather.

1965 saw the construction of three unique W100s. A two-door SWB Coupe was evaluated by Daimler-Benz but was not to enter production – it survives in private hands – and Sindelfingen constructed an armoured 600 Pullman with an extended roof. This was the company's first post-war bullet-proof vehicle and was loaned by Daimler-Benz to various governments and that year also saw the one of their most famous – indeed genuinely iconic – of all Mercedes-Benzes. The four-door Landaulette registration that was made for Pope Paul VI had a raised floor at the rear, modified back doors and a roof that was extended

"The 600 was a vehicle whose ethos was that a truly prestigious car is one of the utmost integrity."

Below: The last 600 was completed in 1982

by nearly three inches. The W100 bearing the registration SV1 ("Stato della Città del Vaticano") was seen in countless newsreels around the world and was used by the Vatican for the next two decades. Today it resides in the company's museum).

The last W100 left the factory when the Mercedes-Benz W126 and especially the W123 were dominating the roads of Europe

yet it could not be said to look anachronistic. A 600 was, and is, a motor-car above mere fashion. Perhaps the best summary of the 600's impact on automotive design is perhaps best encapsulated by the conclusion of that Road & Track test of 53 years ago:

Every automobile is essentially a specialized machine designed to perform a specific function. All succeed or fail in direct relationship to how well they fulfil this function and must be evaluated in light of these standards. By these criteria, the 600 scores very high. The Mercedes 600 comes close to fulfilling its role with perfection, perhaps closer than any other car we have ever tested.

That is why the W100 will be remembered for generations to come; it was a vehicle whose ethos was that a truly prestigious car is one of the utmost integrity. Small wonder that even when glimpsed in a semi-forgotten 1969 comedy, the Mercedes-Benz 600 mesmerised – and continues to do so.







Modded Mercs

Words: Sam Skelton

Winging It

The Boschert B300 was unusual, even by the standards of the tuner world...

The late 1980s were a time of excess, with scores of companies happy to tailor your car to your every need. But let's say you're the sort of Mercedes diehard who wishes the marquee still made a two door Gullwing coupe? Enter Hartmut Boschert and the B300-24C Biturbo.

Boschert was an engineer from Emmendingen, who had seen what the likes of SGS, Zender and Sbarro were doing and decided he'd like a slice of the action. The way he saw it, the B300-24C filled a gap in Mercedes' own range. "Mercedes builds the SL only as a two-seater. I offer a comparable vehicle as a four-seater." And you needed deep pockets, when the R129 300SL-24 cost 132,000DM, the Boschert list price was a whole 48,000DM higher. That, of course, included the cost of the base 300CE-24.

No wonder just eleven were produced; built on Boschert's behalf at the Zagato factory in Turin, Italy. Boschert's intention had been to limit production to 300 cars, but a combination of the price and idiosyncratic styling meant that there were simply too few buyers for Hartmut Boschert's updated



"Boschert's intention had been to limit production to 300 cars, but there were simply too few buyers."

Gullwing.

His car left Mercedes as a standard C124 300CE-24 – but not by the time Boschert had finished. Almost ten inches were removed from the centre, shortening the cabin to transform the car from gentleman's cruiser to sporty coupe. The wheelbase remained untouched; the extra length removed from the rear overhang and the rear body moved forward over the chassis. The front end didn't escape lightly either – Boschert modified it to resemble the then-new R129 SL – unless you can get close enough to see the rear or the interior, the conversion's more than convincing. Some Boscherts were simply left this way and trimmed as a pillarless – if short – conventional coupe, but many followed the original Boschert design template.

That template involved a total redesign between the front and rear pillars, incorporating far higher sills to provide support. With a pair of long Gullwing doors, after all, the shell needed to be as stiff as it could get. Gullwing doors were a popular modification throughout the 1980s – especially on Mercedes given the heritage – but the Boschert was one of few which featured side panels »



Modded Mercs



wholly redesigned to accommodate the doors rather than modifying existing templates to suit.

The engine wasn't ignored either - Boschert B300-24Cs employed a Mosselmann twin-turbocharging system to boost power to 320bhp, with well over 300lb.ft of torque available throughout much of the rev range. This comprised two Garrett T25 turbochargers, a charge air cooler, a turbo-fuel computer and a twin-pipe exhaust system - and means 0-60 in six seconds, with a top speed in excess of 165mph. Boschert co-developed the suspension system with Bilstein, and the car sits three inches lower than a standard example. These changes make the B300-24C a far more focused

"Boschert employed a Mosselmann twin-turbocharging system to boost power to 320bhp."

driver's car than the 300CE-24 upon which it is based.

The interior was similar to the production C124 model - though trimmed with full leather as standard, Boschert logos, and typically piano black trim in place of the standard veneers. Obviously, all Mercedes logos were replaced with Boschert branding; this being unsanctioned by Stuttgart and registered with the German authorities as the product of a separate manufacturer despite its base.

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Andrew Roberts Contributor

Benz On Film:
1968 Mercedes 280S

OCTOPUSSY

Thirty five years on, the Mercedes content in Octopussy is among the most captivating in film history

Octopussy is a film that is reasonably hard to define. On the one hand there is the quite excruciating tuk-tuk chase that looks as though it was rejected from a Carry On film, 007 performing a Tarzan impression, and the double act between Roger Moore and Patrick Macnee. In itself, it is quite delightful, but it does make the viewer wonder if this is a reinterpretation of Dad's Army rather than the 13th Bond feature. However, the locations are pleasant, Roger is (wisely) not taking any of this seriously – and Stephen Berkoff is busily gnawing on any available scenery. His General Orlov is the sort of officer who can enter rant mode in a nanosecond, so it comes as no surprise that he issues orders to 'follow that car!' after our hero borrows a 1968 Mercedes-Benz 280S and drives along the railway lines along a railway in "Berlin".

The chase was actually shot at the Nene Valley Railway, making the shooting of the picture one of the most exciting events to occur in the vicinity of Peterborough since the city gained its first mini-



roundabout. Moore was open about his use of stunt professionals (including for 007's running scenes) and during Octopussy his double Martin Grace was very badly injured. During the scene where Bond dangles off the side of the speeding train communication had broken down between the camera crew in a helicopter, the driver of the locomotive and the stunt crew. Grace hit a concrete wall that was parallel to the track and he later observed that:

"The impact was so lightning fast that I only realised that I had hit

something when I found I was hanging prone for dear life on the side of the train! Adrenalin was pumping through my arms like never before. I looked down and saw my trouser leg had been ripped off and saw my thigh bone through the gash in my thigh muscle."

Sir Roger understandably referred to Martin

Grace as 'the bravest man I have ever known'.

Asides from the W108, which ultimately finishes in a creek to the mild consternation of the local fishermen, Octopussy also features a 1973 W116 and a 1980 W123 200. For Louis Jourdan's fiendish mastermind there is also a 1967 W100 Pullman which was a standard issue company car for any self-respecting Bond villain. But it is the 280S that lingers in the memory – together with Moore's delivery of 'You'll need this to play with your asp'.







W123 Buying guide

Words: Jack Grover

Buying a W123

The famously durable '70s saloon is an increasingly desirable classic. But it is by no means simple to buy, with lots of lurking trouble for the unwary. Here are the major things you need to check

All the W123's predecessors warranted a nickname – there was the 'Ponton', the 'Heckflosse' and the 'Strich Acht'. But the W123, the most successful Mercedes-Benz car ever when it ended production in 1985 and which is still renowned the world over for its durability and reliability, never earned such a moniker.

Perhaps that's a sign that the W123, while never exactly unpopular, did suffer more than many of its fellow star-badged cars from the doldrums of middle age. With 2.7 million W123s built they were never in short supply. Granted in the UK they were rarer than the thousands of white-painted 200Ds which clustered around every airport terminal and city centre kerb from Luxembourg to Lagos – here a basic 230E cost more than a fully-loaded Ford Granada Ghia – but they were valued status symbols for the professional classes or those who treasured a car they could keep for

years. Well-off businessmen could opt for the C123 coupe while the county set for whom a Volvo was too small and brittle favoured the S123 estate.

But changing fashions and graceful ageing saw many W123s fall into second-, third- or seventh-hand owners who wanted something they could run into the ground with no maintenance or major bills. Many S123s ended their days as substitute vans burdened by ladders, paint pots and sheets of plywood. More affluent buyers were favouring the sleeker, more upmarket W124 and a decade ago when the market woke up to the fact that the W123 had real classic value as well as being perhaps the finest mid-size saloon Mercedes ever made, there weren't many left. Even a Mercedes couldn't withstand the salty climate of the UK for 25 years – grinding round the streets of Kampala everyday was a relatively easy life by comparison!

This means that a lot of W123s didn't survive long enough to make »

W123 Buying guide

the transition from workhorse to classic, and many of those that did are in rather delapidated condition. Fortunately the rising values of the W123 means that the average condition is now trending upwards but there are still plenty of pitfalls, which is where this guide comes in.

BODYWORK

Start off by checking the generic areas as these are the first to go – wheel arches, sills (including the jacking points at each end) and the boot floor. More specific W123 rot-spots include the inner sills, visible by lifting the carpets and checking for bubbling paint or flaky metal, and the battery box at the rear offside of the engine bay. Lift the battery out (hopefully the seller will let you!) to get a proper look at the inner wing and bulkhead here. Early W123s didn't have plastic wheel arch liners and many later cars will have lost them, so in these cases pay extra attention to the condition of the inner and outer front wings by looking and feeling into the rear of the wheel arch.

Look around the bonnet hinges rainwater due to blocked drain holes here. Other drain holes in the doors and especially the sun roof should also be clear and check the areas around them for rust caused by trapped water. Leaky window and door seals let moisture into the car which is then retained by the carpets, rotting out the floors. Check for signs of water pooling in the boot and spare wheel well caused by perished boot seals, and rust around the rear screen on saloons caused by water getting into the metal around the seal – this is all the more important on coupes as the rear quarter wing panel is expensive to repair or replace. Estates must have rust-free tailgates, rear wings, rear floors and rear valances as these parts are very expensive to put right.

ENGINES

A wide variety of power units was



fitted to the W123 but they broadly break down into four- and six-cylinder petrol engines and four- and five-cylinder diesels. The four-pot engines were the M115 unit at first then the M102. The entry-level 200 always had a carburettor while the 230 gained fuel-injection and became the 230E. The six-cylinder petrol W123s used the single overhead cam M123 engine in the 250 and the DOHC M110 in the 280 (later 280E). The naturally-aspirated diesels were the 200D (with the OM615), the 240D (OM616) and the five-cylinder 300D (OM617). The 300DT with a turbocharged OM617 in the W123's last years is rare but one of the most desirable W123s.

While none of these engines are plagued by real troubles, the age and mileage of W123s means that many are coming to the end of their natural lives. All use camshafts driven by chains which now have a reputation for snapping but that's simply due to the age and mileage of most of the W123s out there. Listen for rattles from the front end of the engine –



some noise is normal when cold but if it continues with a hot engine then this points to trouble. Renewing the chain is not a major job but one that is best entrusted to a specialist. The W123's oil pressure gauge is measured in bar and a healthy engine will see the needle pegged against the top stop in normal driving, dropping to no less than one bar at a hot idle.

Petrol engines use either auto-choke Solex carburettors or Bosch K-Jetronic injection. Both systems suffer with age as vacuum hoses and diaphragms perish. Carburettor problems usually surface as running-on and difficulty starting when hot, while fuel injected cars will get problematic to start from cold. The carbs are fairly easy to rebuild but the K-Jetronic system is a specialist job and a full rebuild of the system can be expensive. Misfiring could well be due to failure of the solid-state electronic 'spark controller', which can be replaced for around £100.

Clean oil, coolant and air filters are essential with the diesels. Difficulty



starting when cold with clouds of blue smoke point to dead glow plugs or low compression (check for heavy breathing from the oil filler cap), while soot clouds can point to the injectors and pump needing overhauling – worth it at around £200 so long as you're confident the engine is basically healthy.

TRANSMISSION & SUSPENSION

Four-speed or five-speed manual or four-speed automatic transmissions, all of Mercedes' own design, were available on the W123. Rebuilds can be very expensive so a transmission with signs of problems should be a dealbreaker.

Most W123s in UK spec will be autos and all should change gear smoothly under all but the most aggressive acceleration. Check that the kick-down functions works briskly and with no 'slurring' between ratios. Slow shifts, especially when cold, usually point to clogged fluid filters or dirty fluid, while grabbing and jarring mean that internal work is required.

With the manual gearboxes, sloppy action can be due to wear in the gear lever mounts or the selector mechanism which is relatively easy to repair. Avoid cars with worn synchromesh or which jump out of gears on the overrun as this means the box is on its way out.

Although it is light and low-geared the steering should not be vague, with no more than one inch of free play around the centre point at the wheel rim. The car shouldn't wander all over the road, either, although W123s do tend to tramline. There are six ball joints in the steering linkage plus the steering box – the ball joints are easy to repair while the box is a £2000 job.

The suspension has a lot of travel but should always feel controlled. If the car feels sloppy then the dampers are probably tired – for all its soft springing the W123 has very effective dampers which should fly through the standard 'bounce test'. Listen for clonks from the rear end and a sense that the car is steering from the rear over bumps – this can mean that the

Above: Austere interiors are hard-wearing. Final page please remove caption

flexible mounts which attach the rear subframe to the body are perished. These can be replaced as a DIY fix but getting the old mountings off can be very difficult as they are usually well corroded into place. Otherwise look and listen for worn bushes, especially in the rear trailing arms.

INTERIOR

Unless they have been exposed to long-term bright sunlight or damp the interior of a W123 is very durable indeed. Cloth, MB-Tex vinyl and leather seats were available, of which the first two were by far the most common. The MB-Tex is the most durable but both materials are available for retrimming, although this can be pricey. The same goes for door trim and headlining, while standard parts such as the dashtop, centre wood trim and instruments are readily available second hand.

The W123 had a simple electrical system, with electric windows and air conditioning being the most advanced 'gadgets' you're likely to find. Most »

£ W123 Buying guide



electrical problems are due to the wiring becoming brittle with age and heat, leading to broken insulation and random short circuits. This is mostly tedious rather than expensive to sort out but it's not worth taking on a car with a bird's nest for a wiring loom when better examples are out there.

VALUES

The average price for a solid but not perfect W123 is around the £5000 mark for a saloon, £8000 for an estate and £10,000 for a coupe. Condition

and history has much more impact on value than specification, although six-cylinder petrols and 300Ds are worth more than average while two-litre cars of either fuel are worth slightly less. You could pay £3000 for a saloon and come away with a reliable car with lots of life in its at a bargain price but you'd have to choose carefully. Very low-mileage cars or those that have been restored can be priced very high - £12,000 or even £15,000 for a coupe or estate, perhaps £10,000-12,000 for a saloon.

Verdict – what to buy

If you like the character of the classic Mercedes (and there's a very good chance that you do!) there's very little reason not to buy a W123 of some sort. As a classic for 'high days and holidays' a 280CE makes a very good case for itself as a lovely way to travel. The estate makes an excellent load-lugger, tow vehicle and family cruiser and would be a long-lived, practical and very classic machine. Find a diesel if their nature appeals to you or you want to celebrate one of the world's most indestructible car/engine combinations. But our seal of approval goes to a straightforward 230E saloon as the best of all the W123's fine qualities.

Technical Information

200

Engine 1997cc/4-cyl/SOHC
Power 108bhp @ 5200rpm
Torque 125lb-ft @ 3000rpm
Gearbox 4-spd manual/4sp automatic
0-60 17.3sec
Top Speed 104mph
MPG 29.1mpg

230E

Engine 1988cc/4-cyl/SOHC
Power 134bhp @ 5100rpm
Torque 148lb-ft @ 3500rpm
Gearbox 4/5-spd manual/4sp automatic
0-60 11.5sec
Top Speed 112mph
MPG 26.7mpg

240D

Engine 2404cc/4-cyl/SOHC
Power 71bhp @ 4400rpm
Torque 101b-ft @ 2400rpm
Gearbox 4/5-spd manual/4sp automatic
0-60 22.2sec
Top Speed 90mph
MPG 32.6mpg

250

Engine 2525cc/6-cyl/SOHC
Power 129bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 142 b-ft @ 2400rpm
Gearbox 4/5-spd manual/4sp automatic
0-60 15.5sec
Top Speed 115mph
MPG 26.3mpg

280E

Engine 2746cc/6-cyl/DOHC
Power 175bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 169lb-ft @ 4500rpm
Gearbox 4/5-spd manual/4sp automatic
0-60 9.9sec
Top Speed 124mph
MPG 23.2mpg

300D

Engine 2998cc/5-cyl/SOHC
Power 79bhp @ 4000rpm
Torque 125lb-ft @ 2400rpm
Gearbox 4/5-spd manual/4sp automatic
0-60 17.8sec
Top Speed 96mph
MPG 30.3mpg



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1996 Mercedes-Benz SL500

One of the nicest V8 R129s we've ever sampled – and with plenty of good options

It's in top condition cosmetically, with perfect paint, flawless flanks and it's devoid of dents or dings. Green-Black's a top colour, and it really looks the part on this SL500. The panoramic roof is flawless, without a crack or chip to the large expanse of glass above you – and it does feel far superior to a standard metal roof. The larger AMG alloys and AMG bodykit are original, as borne out by the datacard, but we're not sure that they're an improvement over the standard setup. The panoramic roof and the bumpers were repainted in 2015, and it's hard to see any mismatch against the rest of the body – the work was well-considered and well-executed.



Exclusive Mushroom leather is a rare sight, and one which is unfairly so. It's delectable – though rare because of the additional cost when new. It's a good job that this interior is in excellent condition then, with no burns, nicks, tears or splits visible. The plastics are in good order, and there's no wear there either. The LCD screens on the dash – and the instrument binnacle itself – work perfectly with no intermittency, and likewise the radio and air conditioning controls. The windows raise and lower as they should. The fitment of the hardtop precluded us from examining the hood, but we were assured that it is in equally good condition.

The car ran well from a cold start, and settled down nicely when warm. We have no reason to believe there is

£ *One to buy*

Mileage: 51,092 miles
Price: £29,750



anything wrong with it mechanically given the way it sounds, pulls, or feels. Under the bonnet everything looks spot on, and there's nothing averse to report about the brakes or steering systems either. The adaptive suspension works well, and it's absolutely spot on to drive. We really cannot fault this example.

"The fitment of the hardtop precluded us from examining the hood, but we were assured that it is in equally good condition.."

For the first eight months of its life the car was registered to Mercedes-Benz, before passing on to a keeper who had the car until 2016. Its second private owner kept the car until it was traded in to Hilton and Moss. The extensive service history includes paperwork pertaining to the car's original warranty, as well as numerous old MoTs and bills. The complete handbook pack and service book are also present. While in Hilton and Moss's care, it's had a service and basic recommission work, but has needed nothing more.

Conclusion

This is not a cheap R129 SL. But then again, it shouldn't be. It's one of the best on the market, and it has a number of nice options fitted to it. If any R129 deserves to be valued strongly, we think this is the car. It's a top colour scheme too, and in the real world the 500 is the most powerful engine you'd want. SL60s are ludicrously priced in comparison, and SL600s drink far more by dint of the extra cylinders. Buy it, keep it nice, and it will appreciate over time.

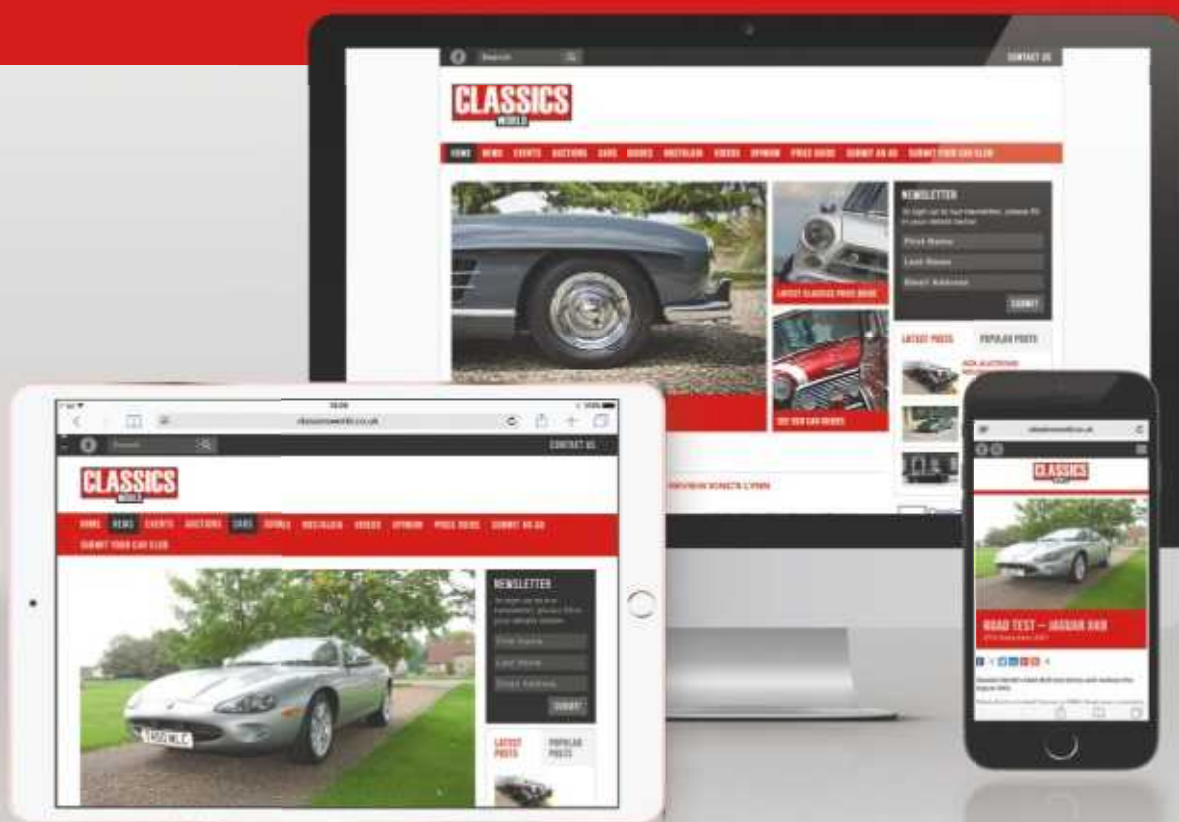
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1979 Mercedes-Benz 350SL

A top class example of the next investment SL

Cosmetically it's excellent, with not a crease or ripple to be seen and no poor matches on the Silver Green paint. It's got good chrome too, with no signs of blemishes on any piece that we could see. We're not sure that we like the spoiler – early R107s look so much cleaner without it, though it's possible to strength the point on the bigger V8s and the later cars. The alloys are in perfect order, and shod with matching tyres with plenty of tread remaining.

Saffron cloth is an undeniably 70s choice – but this is a 1970s car and it works well against the Silver Green bodywork. And it's in perfect condition. The seats



are lovely and squishy, with good vinyl as well as the nice original cloth and plastics. The wood is in excellent condition, and all the equipment works as intended. The carpeted luggage shelf behind the seats looks to be in very good condition, either having been refurbished or simply never used in the first place. It's a car that feels very good overall – not new, but like a three year old example might. It's had new door and A-pillar seals recently, which when combined with the excellent hood should make it snug if the weather turns nasty.

This car was warm when we reached it, as it had been moved out to help with our lead photoshoot prior to our arrival.

£ One to buy

Mileage: 28,646 miles
Price: £37,950



But it ran well when warm and we have no reason to believe it would be any worse when cold. Under the bonnet everything looks spot on, and it feels it from behind the wheel. It pulls properly, the steering and brakes are nice, and it's one of the nicest-riding R107s we've driven. If you've only ever driven tired examples this car will be a revelation.

"It's a car that feels very good – like a three year old example might."



The car's first owner kept it for eight years, before selling to a trader in 1987. The full and original handbook set with service book shows service history until it was sold, and there is more recent history too in the form of bills. Its next keeper kept it until 2015, followed by its third. The V5 lists four keepers, because the trader had registered the car in his name approximately thirty years ago. It's been in storage until recently – recommissioned and serviced by Hilton and Moss ready for sale.

Conclusion

It's a period piece, not only in its colour scheme but in its condition – this car could almost be new, right down to the plastic protecting the carpets when we drove it. If you've got this sort of money to spend and you want a nice R107 SL then this is the car for you, most won't miss the extra size of the larger V8s and will appreciate the purity of this original spec car. Silver Green sets the lines off well too – and this is a car that if kept in this condition is sure to appreciate significantly in future.

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1965 Mercedes-Benz 230SL

The ultimate SL for many – and in excellent shape

We can't fault the way this car looks. Hilton and Moss bought it fresh from a very good restoration, and even with their attitude toward concours finished decided it would be hard to improve on this car. However, small things like the sill covers were incorrect – instead of the correct MB6171 finish, they had been painted body colour. This has now been rectified. The Pagoda top is also in good condition, with no chips or scuffs and with perfect glass. The wheels are in good condition with excellent hubcaps and good tyres – matching, with lots of tread.

A recent retrim in the correct blue vinyl looks the part, and the seats



feel as if they were re-foamed at the same time. It looks good against the white paintwork, which is in equally perfect condition. The wood has been relacquered – both the oddment tray and the stuff on top of the dash – while a shiny new Caliber period-look radio has been fitted. This means modern tunes with a more classic style, and not only does it look good but it works well. The headlining in the hard top is in excellent condition too – and while its fitment precluded an examination of the folding hood, we're assured that this is in as good a condition as the rest of the car.

We didn't get chance to drive the car when cold, as it had to be moved down from the company's upstairs storage facility for us to test. But it ran well when warm and we have

£ One to buy

Mileage: 81,194 miles
Price: £109,500



no reason to believe it would be any worse when cold. It looks spot on under the bonnet, much like it drives – this is an absolutely spot on Pagoda. It pulls unexpectedly well for a 2.3-litre, doubtless owing to the relative lightness when compared to the later 280s. It brakes and corners well too – all in, an excellent example.

"The dealer bought it fresh from a very good restoration, and decided it would be hard to improve."

It's believed that the car spent some time in France from 2002 to 2010, looking in the history folder – a chunk of the file is in French. The history file shows an extensive history of bills prior to 1996. Further bills during 2015 and 2016 indicate upwards of thirty thousand pounds were spent on restoration work then. In 2015 there was a full engine rebuild totalling £5000, with a further £1782 spent the following year. There's a flash drive in the history file with several photographs from the restoration included. The V5 lists a total of six former keepers.

Conclusion

The 230SL is arguably the purest Pagoda of the bunch, and purity is reinforced in this instance by the beautiful white coachwork. As a right hand drive automatic, it's the car the market wants most, and it's in a condition that is so close to perfect that most of us couldn't tell the difference – it is only when compared to concours cars that you could pick holes. The period-look radio is a nice touch too – it doesn't seem out of place but it brings with it lots of modern functionality. It's certainly a strong price, but it's a strong car that in our opinion warrants every penny of it.

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Market Analysis

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





Auction guide

Words:
Justin Lazic

April-May 2018 saw a big turnout of classic Mercedes at auction in the UK – a total of 54 offered, with 34 sold: a sale rate of 63 per cent. Comparing this with the past three years' worth of results, this was an above-average return.

The only car to crack £100,000 was an ultra-rare, one of 25 in RHD 2008 CLK63 AMG Black showing just 4,000 miles, sold at Silverstone on 18 May at The Wing for £112,500 including premium and VAT.

This particular car might have attracted the highest nominal value, but by far the best weight-for-age standout this month was the very similar 2007 CL63 AMG offered by Historics at Brooklands a day later. Finished in Midnight Blue having covered a more realistic 25,000 miles, it achieved £22,960, a perfect balance between purchaser value and value realised, given tough market conditions for second hand S Class coupes of all generations since the W111/112.

This particular vehicle was most of the CLK Black for a fraction of its price yet achieved the most for any S Class coupe offered this year for its age – a moment of true market harmony.

Historics were as usual the most active house for Mercedes, with 24 offered and 15 sold – a solid return.

Of particular interest at Brooklands was a model which for many years has promised much but delivered indifferently: an R107 560SL.

Contrary to some beliefs in the wider world, the 560SL was in fact the third most prolific of all R107 models, with 49,347 produced during its model span of 1985-1989, out of a total production of 300,175 (including the SLC models).

Therefore, the 560SL is not the rare prospect many believe it to be – the rarest R107 of all is the

"It achieved £22,960, a perfect balance between purchaser value and value realised."

420SL, with just 2,148 produced.

One of these appeared at SWVA and achieved £8,768 – pretty good value for a V8-engined R107.

What the 560SL definitely is however is exotic, having never been UK-delivered when new, making every car an import by necessity. The the Signal Red example at Historics was fitted at sale with an MPH speedometer and showed just 79,000 miles, however it was left hand drive.

Closer inspection revealed US impact bumpers fitted as per original spec, but interestingly these had been painted in the same colour as the body to minimise their visual impact. Whilst the author is known for a stance of absolute originality on classic Mercedes models, this solution is to be admired for its intent to improve the appearance of what can be a much-criticized feature of an otherwise desirable model. It achieved £15,680 which was double the price of the aforementioned 420SL – a big ratio in V8 SL terms.

Another notable entrant in the SL stable was the 1990 R129 500SL offered by SWVA on 27 April in Poole, which achieved £6,247. Finished in Blue-Black Metallic with Mushroom leather, and showing 99,000 miles, this model was an ultra-rare early "pre-cat" R129 which had the benefit of factory-







£ Auction guide

deleted catalytic converters – the last of its type.

The fastest ever production car Mercedes-Benz had ever produced to that point, it represented fantastic value and still wore correct original 8-hole alloy road wheels and – importantly – an analogue odometer.

The analogue odometer models were phased in the latter stages of 1994 and it has become a common sight to see the 1989-1994 R129 and W140 models mysteriously sporting digital odometers in recent years. Buyer beware: anything Mercedes produced up to and including 1993 was fitted with an analogue odometer cluster, and most of the 1994 models were as well. If in doubt, check with your dealer.

Demonstrating how rare good examples are now becoming, just one W123 was offered at auction during this period: a 1982 200 saloon at Brightwells on 15 May. Showing 150,000 miles and attractively finished in Classic White, it achieved £3,696. This was a very good result for the vendo as the 200 saloon model with this range of mileage would have averaged £500 in the trade and £1,500 privately in the past five years. So often the truism holds that as things become harder to find, people will compete to pay more for them.

Also in saloon car world was an immensely attractive W124 260E at Historics, ambitiously estimated at £10,000-14,000 and achieving a still well above average £7,840, it showed just 15,000 kilometers from new as a Japanese import still yet to wear UK number plates. Again, market values for 124 saloons appear to be on the rise – but only for the very best examples at this stage.

We conclude this month with a look at H&H's return to The Pavilion Gardens in Buxton, a much-loved venue which hadn't seen auction

Sold Mercs at auction November 2017

| Date | House | Car | Result including premium and VAT | Venue |
|---------|-------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 18/5/18 | Silverstone | CLK63 AMG Black | £112,500 | The Wing, Silverstone |
| 18/5/18 | Silverstone | 190SL | £81,000 | The Wing, Silverstone |
| 18/5/18 | Silverstone | 230SL | £92,813 | The Wing, Silverstone |
| 18/5/18 | Silverstone | 300SEL 3.5 | £33,750 | The Wing, Silverstone |
| 19/5/18 | Historics | 380SL | £15,282 | Brooklands Museum |
| 19/5/18 | Historics | 260E | £7,840 | Brooklands Museum |
| 19/5/18 | Historics | 300SL | £12,880 | Brooklands Museum |
| 19/5/18 | Historics | SL320 | £3,962 | Brooklands Museum |
| 19/5/18 | Historics | SL320 | £8,400 | Brooklands Museum |
| 19/5/18 | Historics | CL63 AMG | £22,960 | Brooklands Museum |
| 19/5/18 | Historics | 220SE | £31,360 | Brooklands Museum |
| 19/5/18 | Historics | 220SE Cabrio | £53,204 | Brooklands Museum |
| 19/5/18 | Historics | 600SL | £33,320 | Brooklands Museum |
| 19/5/18 | Historics | 560SL | £15,680 | Brooklands Museum |
| 19/5/18 | Historics | 300SL | £19,880 | Brooklands Museum |
| 19/5/18 | Historics | E55 AMG | £17,360 | Brooklands Museum |
| 19/5/18 | Historics | E320 Cabrio | £3,509 | Brooklands Museum |
| 19/5/18 | Historics | SL320 | £5,094 | Brooklands Museum |
| 19/5/18 | Historics | S320 | £1,904 | Brooklands Museum |
| 24/4/18 | H & H | 190E | £3,522 | Pavilion Gardens, Buxton |
| 24/4/18 | H & H | SL320 | £8,438 | Pavilion Gardens, Buxton |
| 27/4/18 | SWVA | SLK230 Kompressor | £1,750 | Poole |
| 27/4/18 | SWVA | 190E | £2,576 | Poole |
| 27/4/18 | SWVA | 300CE | £4,110 | Poole |
| 27/4/18 | SWVA | 420SL | £8,768 | Poole |
| 27/4/18 | SWVA | 190E | £3,836 | Poole |
| 27/4/18 | SWVA | E220 Coupe | £5,370 | Poole |
| 27/4/18 | SWVA | 500SL | £6,247 | Poole |
| 15/5/18 | Brightwells | 200 | £3,696 | Leominster Classic & Vintage |
| 15/5/18 | Brightwells | 300SL | £17,696 | Leominster Classic & Vintage |
| 15/5/18 | Brightwells | E220 Estate | £1,848 | Leominster Classic & Vintage |
| 15/5/18 | Brightwells | SL500 | £6,160 | Leominster Classic & Vintage |
| 15/5/18 | Brightwells | SLK200 Kompressor | £3,080 | Leominster Classic & Vintage |
| 15/5/18 | Brightwells | SLK230 Kompressor | £2,218 | Leominster Classic & Vintage |

"What the 560SL definitely is however is exotic, having never been UK-delivered when new."

action since 2015. Only a handful of Mercedes were offered, the pick of which was a 1997 SL320, achieving £8,438. R129s were long regarded as a staple of that venue's sales – it will be interesting to see if history repeats as it returns to regular use in the coming months or years.

As always, research your preferred model prior to bidding and keep a close eye on recent sold results in reports such as this – guide prices are, as the name indicates, for indication only.

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Project Mercedes

Words: Matthew Bell
Pics: Matthew Bell, Paul Wager

Project Mercedes *pt2*

Matt's finished sorting the running issue
– and replaced the dodgy heater

As you will have read during Sam's introduction to our new Mercedes 190E project car, the start of our journey together didn't begin well. I feel sorry for the old girl. She fought hard to get us home but its lack of cooling spelled the end of that. I can happily report that now she is firing on all cylinders and once again happy, so what happened?

Sam's efforts to bring the Merc back to life were very-much welcomed. He'd all but fully cured the Merc's issues but a second opinion from a professional helped put our minds at rest. After all, we want to ensure that each Kelsey fleet car is safe for anyone to drive, no matter how mechanically savvy the occupant is. Local garage TW Autos took care of the work and within a couple of hours, we received a phone call saying that what was left of the problem was diagnosed and fixed.

With the car on the ramp, it was a great opportunity to take a look at the underside to see the condition of the vehicle. To be truthful, the underside was pretty much spotless, a few welds were noted but they appear to be neat and carried out professionally. The

"The final culprit once the leads had been replaced was the distributor cap."

mechanics were quick to note that this is a brilliant example and were surprised by the £1550 buying price; even joking that they'd immediately buy it off of us for closer to £2k, thanks guys but it's a no for now!

Getting down to the issue; The final culprit once the leads had been replaced was the distributor cap. In fact, under inspection of the failed part, you can see green gunk had started to build up on all but one of the nuts, which is why it had failed. The guys commented that under road inspection the car felt as good as new with a replacement cap. I'm less convinced.

For a 2.6-litre straight-six producing

Left: Solid on the ramp – new distributor cap has solved the running fault.

roughly 170bhp, I'm surprised by its lacklustre performance under initial throttle. From a standing start the car feels utterly gutless, pin the throttle and after a few seconds of hesitancy, the car jerks slightly and you accelerate as you would expect. During some research, it seems that the 190E was designed to start off in 2nd gear, which would explain why it feels slow initially and then picks up. It's a fairly easy fix, though; you can adjust the spring within the gear-lever housing for it to start off in 1st gear. It may also be the case that the throttle cable and kick down cable need adjusting; further inspection is needed on this front though.

Once at speed the Merc drives beautifully; very smooth, utter comfort and no issues with keeping up with regular traffic on the roads. All in all it's a brilliant buy. The next immediate issue, however, was the heater unit. As Sam pointed out in the initial introduction in the last issue, while trying to cool the car down I turned the heaters on full, only to find out the unit itself didn't work. Part of that was a lack of coolant, but the heater unit itself wasn't working properly – time to rectify that. »



Project Mercedes

Fitting the new heater

Group Editor of Classic Car Buyer and Classic Car Mart, Paul Wager, knows a thing or two about old German cars having previously been editor of BMW Car some years back and helped me pull the dashboard apart to find the correct part number in order for us to order the part. In fact, by the time I'd got back to my desk, Paul had got off the phone with a Mercedes dealership who had wholeheartedly apologised for not stocking a brand new 190E heater unit in their parts department but had ordered a replacement part from Germany ready for next day delivery. Efficiency at its finest. What impressed me was the customer service; apologising for not stocking a part for a car that hasn't been produced for 20 years! It's worth noting here that those looking for a project Mercedes, or working on one, should seek what parts are available from Mercedes directly. We were surprised to learn that the heater unit from Mercedes was half the price of items listed on eBay! Other items can be similarly cheap.

Changing the heater unit was easy enough as me and Paul both followed a rough guide found on YouTube. Here's a step by step process as to how to do it: upon opening the ashtray, you'll see two screws holding it in place. Remove both these screws and the ashtray will slide out of place revealing the connecting wires, you'll need to remove these too. The upper air vents would usually pull out revealing two further screws, ours were missing but you would normally need to remove these.

All three heater knobs need to be removed, as well as the lamps. Then, with a large socket, remove the bolts in place. A screw, either side of the under-dash (both passenger and driver side), is holding the remainder of the dash in place. Remove these and slide the console out. This will reveal the heater unit which is held in place by two white plastic clips either side. Disconnect the wire control cable from the fan switch and the electrical connector and fan switch. Replace the part and repeat the instructions above in reverse. It's a fairly fiddly job, one that you could do by yourself, but much easier with someone else to help pull the dash off.

From over a month ago when we picked up a car that had catastrophically overheated and had a heater that wouldn't work, we now have a car that's very comfortable to drive and can demist the windows. Next up is to take a look at the gearbox spring and throttle cable to help spruce up acceleration.

Right: Console out, the heater box can be swapped.







Technical Tips



Compare and Contrast

Here's a simple tip which probably comes into the category of 'good practice' and takes only a few seconds, but is often overlooked. When you're replacing something such as a brake disc, ball joint or something else on which there are several similar-looking 'variations', always spend a few seconds comparing the old and new part, to make 100% certain that they are a totally correct match. Look for the less obvious differences too – with a brake disc for example, check the diameters and 'top hat' dimensions match, but don't forget to try the stud hole spacing as well; things like this can and do get changed, and while these days it's relatively unlikely that a part which has been manufactured incorrectly will get through to a customer, it's certainly not unknown.

I've known people spend, literally, hours trying to 'make something fit' when the simple, basic truth is that the part they are trying to put on is not the same as the one they've taken off...

Sparking Success

Once upon a time, spark plugs were supposed to be cleaned and regapped every six months/6000 miles, and renewed annually. Nowadays that's unnecessary, partly because the plugs themselves are better made. Fuel, too, is better. The main change, though, is in the massively improved and much more efficient combustion process of modern cars. Fuel is burnt more efficiently and more constantly, meaning far less need to clean/change plugs – 24, 36 and even 48,000 mile intervals aren't unusual.

There are, though, a couple of sort-of downsides to all this. Firstly, because plugs don't need to come out so often, they don't need to be as accessible. Secondly – and this is where care is needed – a plug which hasn't been out of an alloy cylinder

Below: Spark plugs aren't always easy to remove, but you still need to go carefully if you want to avoid damage...

head in three years could well be a bit tight to get out. You can't, though, go too mad on trying, as if the plug is reluctant to come out when using a standard length socket handle, using something longer might result in a stripped plug thread and massive complications. In cases like this, it's worth trying a little penetrating oil an hour or two beforehand – or better still, allow it to soak round overnight.

Then go a bit easy with the plug spanner – a quick 'jolt' may possibly shock an otherwise tight plug out, but it may also crack the top off, and while clearly that's not an issue if the plugs are being renewed anyway, and it's also hardly a budget-buster if not, it does of course mean that the plug in question now HAS to come out, and the car can't really be driven anywhere else for this to be done...



Words: Peter Simpson



Water or coolant?

Damp front footwells are a common complaint on older cars, and one which it pays to sort out, because besides being annoying, water in constant contact with the floor promotes corrosion. It can also cause electrical problems, as these days it's fairly common for electronic control units and the like to go under the front seats as by and large this is the safest place for them. That doesn't apply though if there's lots of water splashing about too, and don't forget that the sponge-like sound deadening material found under modern car carpets can hold an enormous amount of water.

It is, though, worth bearing in mind that while moisture in front footwells may be rainwater, it's also quite possible for it to be coolant that's escaping via a leaking heater matrix. This is positioned under the dash so that hot air which has passed through it can be projected up to the screen or down to the floor, but this means that if the matrix is leaking, coolant escaping from it will probably end up

Above: Damp front carpets may indicate a leaking windscreen seal or a failing heater matrix/radiator. Fixing the latter is usually a dash-out job on Mercedes cars, and even more complicated if aircon's involved.

where the air is meant to go!

There are a few ways of telling what's happening in cases like this. One – obviously – is a loss of coolant which has no underbonnet explanation. You can also feel the difference if you rub the coolant/water that's escaped between your fingers; coolant with anti-freeze added feels slippery compared to water. Smell is also a clue – warn coolant that's escaping has a rather unpleasant smell that's a lot stronger than pure water. And finally, you should be able to see the anti-freeze colouring in the coolant.

A leaking heater radiator on a Mercedes is generally bad news as renewal is generally a dash-out job, and while it's not always difficult technically, it is fiddly and time-consuming. It's also apt to be especially involved on more upmarket models with complex heater/ventilation systems, as the matrix has to sit in the centre of all the pipework. Certainly something to watch (and feel) for when buying a car that's cheap now but was expensive new...

Clean before fitting...

Talking – as we were earlier in passing – about brake discs, new brake discs should always be cleaned prior to fitting, using a proprietary brake cleaner – never use a conventional engine-type degreaser with brake components. That's because many manufacturers apply a light – and often invisible – coating to the friction surfaces, to prevent them from rusting during storage. As the metal is unpainted, this would otherwise happen in a matter of weeks – think about what happens when you leave a car unused for even a month or so! No-one would buy a 'new' disc with visible corrosion, and parts can sit on stockists shelves for a year or more in some cases, so to prevent problems, the disc is coated. This should, of course, be referred to in any instructions with the discs, but when did you last actually read those?





Technical Tips

Bolt in the hole..

Mercedes-Benz were among the earliest users of fuel injection instead of carburettors, and of course injection operates at far, far higher pressures. More to the point, it's usually active as soon as ignition is switched on. It's therefore sensible, whenever you disconnect a fuel feed pipe, that you plug it firmly in some way; just in case someone should turn the ignition on while it's still disconnected. You may not be the sort who would do that, but most of us have 'friends' who maybe aren't quite so savvy, and such people have a habit of turning up at exactly the wrong moment, and then staying. I once had one such who, after I'd told him for the 14th time that "I really need to concentrate now", plonked himself inside the car I was working on and turned on the ignition so he could listen to the radio. He left the garage a few seconds after I explained why that really wasn't such a good idea...

What you use depends on the type of system being worked on, as some work at higher pressures than others. As you can see, a bolt was a good tight fit in this case and with the original fixing clip still in place and closed around it, it did the job fine.



Wiggle wiggle wiggle...

Though many old school classic car enthusiasts dislike electronics on cars, and believe it's made DIY fault-finding much harder, the ability to plug in a Fault Code Reader (FCR) and be told by the FCR what's going on actually makes life easier in many ways.

However it's not wise to rely on the FCR to the extent of buying an expensive new component just because the FCR it says that's where the fault lies, without first doing a bit of checking. Specifically, few FCRs can differentiate between a failed component and a failed connection into or out of it. It's also a fact that, according to most electronic

Above: Always rule out any chance of a connection problem before condemning an electronic component; fault code readers have difficulty differentiating between them!

component reconditioners, around 30-40% of the parts that they take in for rebuilding are in working order and have therefore almost certainly been condemned due to incorrect diagnosis.

So before renewing that supposedly-defective sensor, air mass meter or fuel pump, have a look at the plug-in wiring connection. Wiggling a few wires – you may find the fault then disappears. It's also worth using a bit of switch-cleaner on a plug-in connector, as although these are meant to be sealed against moisture ingress, things can deteriorate and work loose with age, and sometimes a failing rubber can, rather than keeping the damp out, trap it inside...

Shock Improvement!



Being fairly heavy cars, most Mercedes benefit from new shock absorbers every 100,000 miles or so – even if an MoT hasn't picked up a 'failable' fault. In fact, the official Mot test is a pretty rudimentary check of performance – a shocker can be significantly softer than it should be, but provided no significant fluid leak can be seen, it will still pass.

Contrary to popular belief, the primary function of a car's shock absorbers isn't anything to do with driver or passenger comfort. Rather, shock absorbers are there to keep the wheels in contact with the road, and thus make the car controllable under all conditions. Without shock absorbers the wheels would lose contact regularly, and when this happens, steering and braking are impossible. It therefore follows that weak shock absorbers will impact on a car's high-speed braking and steering capability; this is why shock absorbers are safety-critical components.

Timely renewal therefore makes sense, provided the cost isn't astronomical. In most cases it is realistic, though the self-levelling rear shockers on some Mercedes estates are very pricy – something to be aware of if you're offered one of these at what seems a bargain price. The actual change is generally fairly straightforward and most owners should be able to do a complete set in a day, though you may encounter a rusted-up nut or three – keep a can of penetrating oil handy! Shock absorbers should always be replaced as an axle set – never individually – and ideally do all four. You also need a decent trolley



jack and axle stands, a full range of hand tools and a workshop manual – the precise process does vary somewhat.

What doesn't vary, though, is the difference in a car's ride and handling characteristics that will be bought about by replacing a high mileage set of shockers. You may well not have realised anything was wrong before the change, but I promise that you'll notice a very significant sharpening-up afterwards!

Clockwise from main: Fitting new shock absorbers to a higher-mileage Mercedes usually makes a dramatic improvement to a car's ride and handling...; Most shock absorber swaps are straightforward if you have a good workshop manual and some decent lifting/supporting kit. You may come across the odd seized nut/bolt, though Mercedes quality means it's less likely than on some cars; This one, though, is unlikely to be seized, but you may have problems stopping the shocker piston from turning with the nut. If so, and the shocker is definitely being renewed anyway, just use a pair of grips.



Smooth operator

'Baby Benz' a welcome return to Mercedes ownership

When I decided to buy another Mercedes in 2015, I didn't plan on getting a W201. I had good memories of an R129-series SL500 I had run ten years before, but this time I was after a C124 Coupé. I found the four-pot E220 underwhelming though, while the 'sixes' I saw were in disappointing condition. So what about the 190E 2.6, I wondered, the model described by Robert Cumberford as "the connoisseur's 190"? I started looking around in France, where I live, and over the border in Germany. And so, in February 2016, I found myself on a train to Aachen ...

All the indications were very positive: the car had been owned

"I didn't plan on getting a W201. I was after a C124 Coupé...."

by one family from new and had covered barely 30,000 miles. The dealer selling it sent me a huge portfolio of photographs and even a paint thickness chart for every panel on the car! It had recently been recommissioned, with a new head gasket and oil seals, radiator, thermostat and fan, as well as

Above: The 190 on display at a car show at Meudon, just outside Paris, in summer 2017

replacement brake discs and pads.

On top of this, the 2.6 automatic – an early post-facelift model from November 1988 – was very nicely equipped. Finished in Astral Silver with the rare option of Anthracite velour upholstery, it had some choice extras, including air conditioning, electric sunroof and front windows, alloy wheels and its original Becker Grand Prix radio.

We soon struck a deal, with the dealer throwing in a new set of tyres and taking care of the German export paperwork. Driving 250 miles home in snow was unexpected, but the 190 coped very well. Shortly afterwards, it passed its first French technical inspection with no advisories and was registered in its new homeland.



Julian Parish Contributor

1988 Mercedes 190E 2.6

Mileage: 55,856km

First instalment



Right: 90-degree service position for bonnet gives great access to engine bay



My 'Baby Benz' was ready to enjoy straightaway, but I wanted it to be better still. The 15-hole wheels were looking a bit tired, so I had them refurbed, while a new insulation pad smartened up the engine bay. An alignment check saw the steering wheel re-set to the correct position straight-ahead. The big single windscreen wiper and one of the headlamp wipers also needed adjustment.

With the chance to drive the car a bit more, I soon came to appreciate its blissfully smooth 2.6-litre engine, comfortable ride and decent fuel consumption (over 30mpg on a run). I love the 190's understated appearance, while its compact dimensions are ideal for the narrow country roads around my home.

The extra miles brought a couple of problems to light. A clunk from the rear end was traced to a seized shock absorber, which had to be replaced. The trip meter jammed (no, I didn't try it to zero it when the car was moving!). The electric adjustment for the passenger door mirror failed, but replacing the mirror was an easy job. The air conditioning was pretty weak, but I waited another year to overhaul the system and convert it to use R134a refrigerant.

Over the past 12 months, the car has mainly needed only routine servicing, with one unscheduled repair after the transmission began to jolt when moving between Reverse and Drive. It turned out that the plastic bushings in the linkage had disintegrated: the parts cost just £12 but replacing them was an expensive six-hour job. The brittle plastic clips securing the rear door cards and passenger seat base trim had also snapped at some time in the past, but d: class automotive in Surrey did a fantastic job repairing them.

With the 190 now in great shape, I'm looking forward to attending some car shows and touring Normandy with it this summer - more on that in a future issue!



In Pieces

After it broke his heart, someone's destroyed Sam's Merc

Who doesn't love a bit of *schadenfreude*? After I swapped my coupe for editor Skelton's TE, he gave me a demonstration of how to unfold the rear seats, ripping his new trousers on the tow bar as he did so. As the wool was torn helplessly from its seams, I howled with laughter. Little did I know I was going to pay for that, and pay dearly.

My first two weeks of ownership went well. I enjoyed pointing the three pointed star at things and powering out of the bends, making every trip to the shops feel like a Teutonic crusade. The car wasn't without its critics, though. My girlfriend unfavourably compared its colour scheme to a tin of Vaseline. Given what the car did to



me, Vaseline could have made the experience less painful...

The running fault that Skelton and I both felt was a MAF sensor was getting worse. I took it to my local mechanic who looks after my "fleet" for his opinion on the issue. "It's probably the wiring the loom," he said, looking at me as if I was certifiable for buying this troubled tin of lubricant.

The infamous biodegradable wiring loom is a bit like that tiny little hole in the bottom of Darth Vader's Death Star that led to its destruction. One fairly small oversight from the designers that turned out to be a fatal flaw. It's a flaw so well known, I kicked myself for not thinking of it sooner. The original had been replaced at some stage, which I thought ruled issues out and so had Skelton. However,



Sam Mace Contributor

1992 Mercedes Benz 280TE

Mileage: 202,132

Final instalment

digging a little further into the engine bay revealed multi plugs that led to nowhere, dangling carefree under the radiator. In some places Sellotape had been used in place of insulation tape. What looked like a new loom was in fact only a partial replacement, and what was left of the old stuff was in a dire state.

“Every panel had been stoved in and one of the tyres slashed.”

This wasn't a disaster. Good wiring looms can be found. While it was in the workshop, I asked if the car could be raised up so I could see the underside more clearly. I saw underneath before I agreed to buy it, and it seemed solid. Now I had the chance to properly admire it. It had been well undersealed, and no rust was showing through it...Apart from one two pence piece sized bubble near the offside sill.

I gave this a gentle poke. Half a second later, a chunk of underseal and rust was covering my shoes with dust. We spotted several more innocuous bubbles which all did pretty much the same thing as the first when disturbed.

As the colour began draining from my face, my mechanic asked if I had checked under the sill covers. The underside looked so clean that I hadn't bothered. Looking through the jacking point covers revealed metal so rotten that it could have been salvaged from a 100-year-old shipwreck. In some places the metal was completely absent.



As somebody who has owned Rover 800s and old Jaguars, I can cope with electrical faults and I can cope with rust. What I can't cope with is both at the same time. I decided to do the honourable thing, and make it somebody else's problem. Once it was listed for sale online, the real fun started. All kinds of people came out of the woodwork making me offers, but all turned out to be time wasters.

Eventually, a buyer who seemed genuine made me a good offer - enough for me to get most of my investment back. On the eve

Above: Unexpected rot was only the start...

of collection day, I walked to the Mercedes to put it on the drive way. I'd taken to parking it round the corner from my house, to keep numbers down on my shared driveway. What I found was a shocking level of vandalism. We're not just talking a key dragged down the side or the three pointed star ripped off, but every panel had been stoved in and one of the tyres slashed.

Fortunately the buyer still wanted to see it, and I let him take it away for a pittance. I don't know if the car will go back on the road. And after all it put me through, I don't really care. 🐼



David Towers

1999 Mercedes CLK 320

Return to **FORM**

David's experiences away from Mercedes have brought him back, with this newly acquired CLK

I have only had this Mercedes CLK320 for a short time, it replaces a disastrous foray into British car ownership that over three years, bankrupted me... sadly, I'm not joking! Before, I was a serial Mercedes botherer having had: SL500s, and a variety of S-Classes with all manner of engine sizes, I love Mercedes and have always had good luck with them.

I was looking for a convertible to replace a much loved MX-5: I always take my dogs with me and an MX-5 is no good for two dogs to lay on the same seat. There were two for sale locally, one private, one trade. The private car was older, had done many more miles and was much tattier outside. Strangely, the chap selling it seemed to value it slightly higher than its weight in gold so I bought the one from the dealer!

It had been traded in for a newer Mercedes after 14 years in the same hands and had been looked after.. but, as we all know, when a new car is on the horizon, maintenance tends to get a bit slack. And so it proved: first day I had it, tried to shut the roof and the handle fell off in my hand! It took me half a day to work out what was what, drill out broken rivets, replace linkages and put it all back together. It took that long as I took the dogs for a walk midway through doing the job as I needed a 'think' about it!

Then it rained. A new novel feature

Right: David's CLK is a welcome relief after a foray into British car ownership

in any car was found: swimming floor mats in the passenger side. Yup, blocked drains in the air vents, took apart and got a load of mud and about a gallon of water out - I kept the mud as I had previously cleaned out the wheelarches and got another cubic acre of finest English countryside out. While under the arches, I waxoyled it all, I like waxoyl!

One thing that I was aware needed changing was the serpentine belt, it was worn on the inside edge and really, I should have taken more notice of that fact.. On the way to take the pictures for this feature, we had a 'failure to proceed!'. I uttered the immortal words to my friend Mark: 'watch this!' as I pressed the accelerator pedal vigorously. There was a slight 'bang' and a battery light came on along with heavy steering etc... yes, the belt had tired of doing its job and departed for pastures new. AA to the rescue and amazingly, they had not only the belt, but also the pulley. Oddly, it was the same chap that came out to me a month earlier when the British heap failed for the final time. Ho hum...

The dogs love it, they have the space in the back to do their thing: Phoebe (the old black lab) lays down in comfort, while Chester (the stupid Basset thing) sticks his head over the side and watches the world pass by, occasionally making comment to other dogs as he glides by in the comfort of his chauffeur driven Mercedes!







CLUB NEWS

The latest from the Mercedes Benz Club and the 190 community

As mentioned last month, on 28th May, the online 190E group Mercedes-190.co.uk held their 9th annual West Midlands Meet, attracting over 100 cars. A celebration of all things of the Sacco era, and everything either side the cars on offer were not all the usual standard examples. Many modified and even a 190E with a Sharpie drawn paint job, it was pretty interesting to see how owners personalise their cars. Of course, there were some stunning original examples of W201 as well as a glorious 51,000 mile C107 280SLC, which won the prize for the most original car. Also on show was a very rare W126 560SEL AMG – with Aero 2 body kit and dash mounted Sony TV, this would have been

"It was pretty interesting to see how owners personalise their cars."

quite a car when originally delivered by Yanase in Japan.

Organised by father and son team Robbie and Rhys Mangat, the West Midlands event is an annual success, and with next year being the 10th anniversary it promises to be even bigger, with some even crazier Stuttgart metal. Their next meeting will be at Mercedes Benz world at Brooklands on 2nd

September. Last year the turnout was very good for a first event – so for any W201 owners, this one should be a must!

Back with the Mercedes Benz Club and the show season is now in full flow, with breakfast meeting and weekend classic car shows being attended by the club. On bank holiday Monday, the West Yorkshire region attended the annual show at Ripley Castle in Harrogate. Next month we look forward to the National Concours at Milton Keynes, which I will be attending but not entering and also our highlight regional show of the year on Father's Day (17th June) at Castle Howard in North Yorkshire. Anyone that hasn't been to this venue before, I'd encourage to come along as the turnout is usually massive – and the house isn't bad either.



Jack O'Brien *Club Editor*



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C4500



2001, 87,500 miles, £4,895 Ono. MoT April 2019. Full service history and 19" wheels. Please call 07944 957191, Devon.
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S CLASS

SL60 AMG



1997, 155,000 miles, £29,995. Metallic grey with charcoal leather. AMG styling including front spoiler and side skirts and the correct AMG18 inch bolted alloys. Cruise control, heated memory orthopaedic seats, electric windows, and naturally air-condition. Please call 01798 874477.
1243

SL

SL500 CONVERTIBLE POWER



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1567

SLK

SLK



2001, 69,000 miles, £3,899. Convertible, electric hardtop, 6 speed supercharge, manual, power steering, electric windows, electric seats, full black leather seats, cruise control, 18" AMG alloys, multi airbags, remote central locking, handbooks and manual. Please call 02380 766870. (T)
1555

SLK 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, airscarf - 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)

SLK 230 KOMPRESSOR



1999, £3,999. 2dr Auto This very genuine example SLK Automatic can be fairly described to be in good overall condition throughout. 3 former keepers, the last private lady owner has kept and maintained the car since August 2010. MOT expires March 15th 2019 with no advisory notes issued on the certificate. Quality Mercedes convertible ready to enjoy over the coming months. Please call 02380 766870 (T)

SLK 230K CONVERTIBLE



1998, 89,000, £3,999. Service history, automatic, power steering, electric windows, power electric hood, alloy wheels, remote central locking, also 2 keys, fully documented history file including old mot's, invoices and bills for servicing repairs, electric roof, finished in canary yellow, black upholstery, nice looking vehicle. Please call 07545 703474, Hampshire. (T)

SLK 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 2&1/2 years and comes with service history. Please call 07545 703474, Hampshire. (T)

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1095

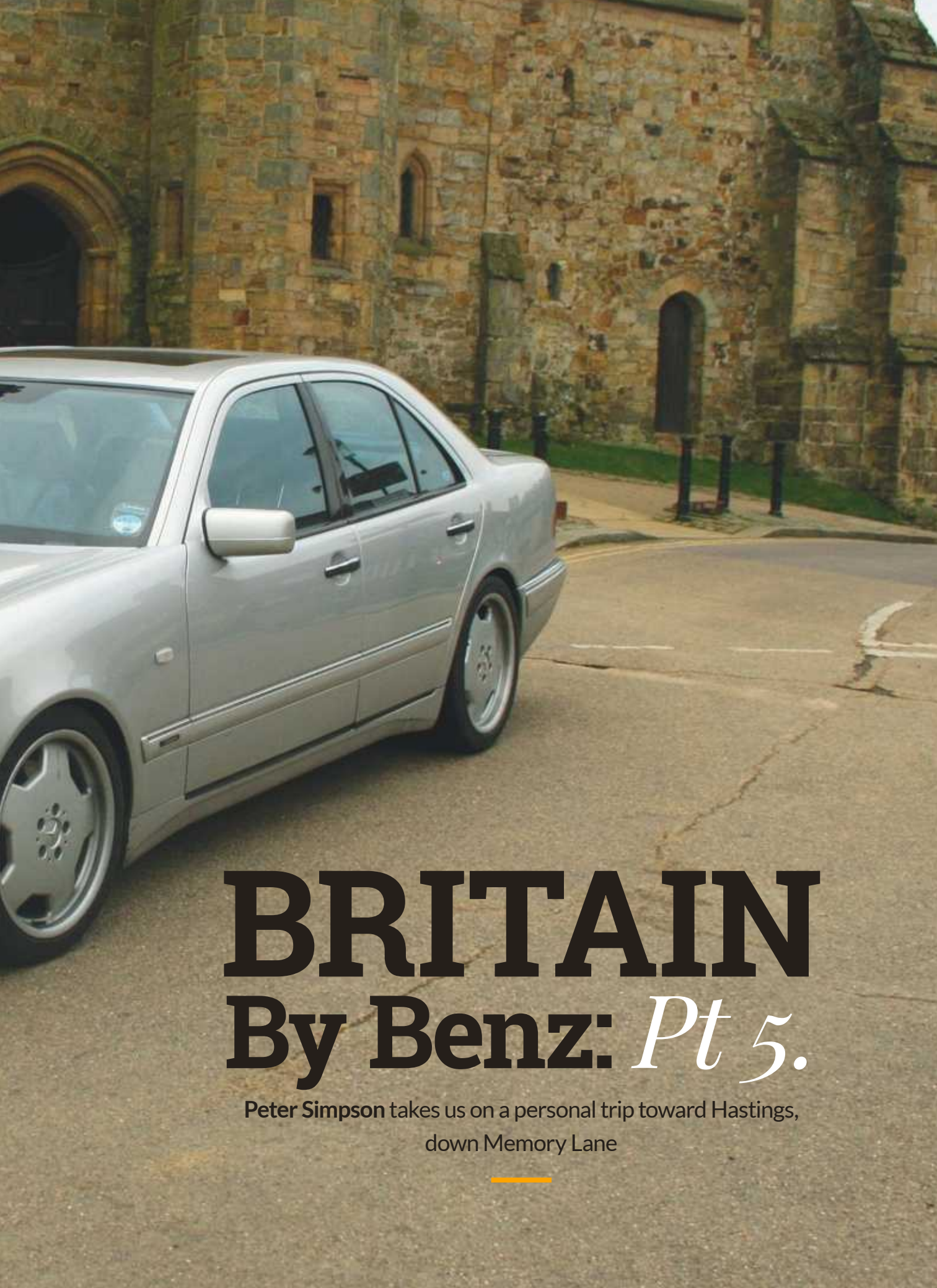
PAGODA SPARES

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





BRITAIN By Benz: *Pt 5.*

Peter Simpson takes us on a personal trip toward Hastings,
down Memory Lane





Classic Touring

Words and pics: Peter Simpson

London to Brighton may be the most famous route from capital to coast, but in my view there's a much better one a few miles east of the A23, namely the A21 London to Hastings road. With roads to suit most driving tastes, lots of interest en route and an end-destination that's ideal for a day trip, weekend break or longer, this is a drive you really should do.

It's a significant route in motoring history, too. Back in 1909, while most people saw motoring as just a rich man's leisure pastime, a few far-sighted individuals recognised its true potential. That year the AA, with strong support from Hastings MP Arthur Du Cross, organised 400 volunteer drivers to convey an entire Guards battalion – plus arms and equipment – the 60 miles from London to Hastings in less than four hours. This first-ever mass mechanical movement of troops by road rather than rail proved the flexibility and suitability of motor vehicles, and was a major landmark in cars being officially accepted.

Du Cross did, though, have a huge commercial interest in this. In 1901, he'd founded the Dunlop Rubber Company and bought 400 acres of land in Birmingham which became Fort Dunlop. His father Harvey (who had been Hastings MP until 1908) was also a director of Dunlop Rubber and co-owner (with S. F. Edge) of the Motor Power Company which imported Clement-Gladiator cars from France.

The 'Guards Run' was for many years commemorated by a London-Hastings veteran car run, and Hastings was also once a regular RAC Rally stage destination. Both died out in the 1950s, but two other motor events have taken their place. Every May bank holiday Monday, 25,000 motorcyclists descend on Hastings in the biggest event of its kind anywhere. Then in October,

"The 'Guards Run' was for many years commemorated by a London-Hastings veteran car run."

the Historic Commercial Vehicle Society 'Sprat & Winkle' run brings historic commercials into the heart of Hastings Old Town.

Your writer first made this journey more than 40 years ago, in an Austin A35 van. This time my transport could hardly have been more different. My old mate Rob George of King's Lynn based Anglia Car Auctions lent me a rather fine 5.4 litre E55 AMG W210 (since sold); what an understated beast of a car and at 350bhp exactly ten times as powerful as the A35!

Back to the route. There are many places of interest on the way, and Hastings itself deserves at least three days. I therefore have little room to do much more than name most of them, and provide links for further research.

From Riverhead – a few miles south from the start and just outside the M25 – to Tonbridge, you've a choice. The current A21, built between 1966 and 1971, is a lovely fast A road which rises and falls with the weald and North Downs, giving fine views on the way down in particular.

However the old route through Sevenoaks and Hildenborough is still there – and even retains some period A21 signage, even though most is now the A225 and the final section has been demoted further

and is now the B245. As we'll see in a moment, I recommend a detour at Tonbridge via Tunbridge Wells, but after you rejoin the A21 a few miles south and a short section of new dual carriageway, the A21 is mainly single-carriageway trunk road of a type that's all-but vanished elsewhere. While this is an absolute pain for commuters, as a classic driving route it's really rather pleasant, though it can get busy on bank holidays and July and August weekends.

Starting near the M25...

Start at Polhill, just outside Bromley. The famous transport café here has been replaced by the 7 Hotel Diner – a rather nice retro Fifties style 'roadhouse' with a large car park and an ideal place to meet if you're planning a drive down in convoy. Access Polhill from junction 4 of the M25 – follow A21 towards Bromley, then turn left towards Knockholt station, and you'll reach Polhill after about a mile. This 'old' A21 is now the A224, and the A21 now 'disappears' under the M25 between Junctions 4 and 5.

The A224 takes you to Riverhead. Here, choose old A21 (now A225) or new A21 to Tonbridge. Either way, there are three good stopping-off points. First we have Sir Winston Churchill's former home at Chartwell, which is exactly as Sir Winston left it in 1965 with his books and furniture, many items of Churchill memorabilia, and amazing views to the south. Nearby is Hever Castle, childhood home of Anne Boleyn where there's a regular programme of special events including classic car club rallies/gatherings. Finally, we have Knole Park, near Sevenoaks (National Trust). This was built as a palace for the Archbishop of Canterbury, but given to Henry VIII when it was wise for clergy to be in the king's good books, and since 1603 has

Bottom left:
The Pantiles,
Tunbridge Wells



Classic Touring

been home to the Sackville family; including writer Vita Sackville-West.

Tonbridge itself has a (very) ruined castle, and the Rose & Crown is a rather pleasant period establishment for morning tea. Head for Tunbridge Wells rather than back on to the A21 now, as contrary to its stockbroker and commuter town image, 'The Wells' is definitely worth a visit.

Waters at the Wells

When you get into town, follow signs to the Spa Valley Railway, even if you're not planning to visit that, as there's parking hereabouts (but Sainsbury's carpark has time and use restrictions) and the famous 'Pantiles' area is close by. Within this, you have the Chalybete Spring - the water from which first attracted tourists.

The Spa Valley Railway runs to Eridge - about five miles. Steam and 'heritage diesel' locos are used and railway enthusiasts may also want to know that the Spa Valley's base at Tunbridge Wells is the only London, Brighton and South Coast engine shed still used for its original purpose...

From Tunbridge Wells we rejoin the A21 via the A264. The short distance from here to Kipping Cross is new dual carriageway with no viable alternative, but after that, apart from a couple of bypasses it's single carriageway and little changed since the sixties. You can also loop off at several places to visit various villages. For example, Lamberhurst was once a horrid bottleneck, but since being bypassed has become again a lovely traditional Kent village with two inviting-looking pubs. Scotney - a ruined 14th century moated castle in marvellously picturesque surroundings - is at the top of the hill out of Lamberhurst.

A few miles later we cross into East Sussex, at Flimwell. Look out for the oddly-shaped white building on your right; this dates from 1926



Top right:
Hastings Old
Town from the
East Hill



and is one of a small number of early filling stations which have recently been listed.

A little further, and on the southern edge of Hurst Green, you'll see a left turnoff on a right-hand corner that's signposted Bodiam Castle. Bodiam is a 'classic' castle - square, round tower at each corner and surrounded by a moat. You'll probably recognise it, as it's been used in many films. There are towers to climb, battlements to walk around and look for the 'period graffiti'.

Just down the road is the (current) terminus of the Kent and East Sussex steam railway. There's no public car parking at the station; most people use the castle car park (no 'you must visit the castle' restrictions) and take

a 10-15 minute walk. Unlike the Spa Valley which once carried 100 trains a day, the K&ESR was always a railway backwater and while it's had to adapt, it still retains the feel of a rural branch.

The Battlegrounds...

The Bodiam road rejoins the A21 just south of Sedlescombe - a pleasant Sussex village - from where it's a straight run into Hastings. Alternatively, turn right just past the 'Welcome to Hastings' sign and visit Battle, the famous Abbey and the most historically significant site in Britain where, on October 14, 1066, Britain was invaded for the last time. To see the battlefield either pay to go in Battle Abbey or if you're a cheapskate/in a hurry and happy



to glimpse from a distance, take the left turn (signposted Catsfield) down Powdermill Lane opposite the station drive; the battlefield is on your right.

"Powdermill Lane and the Battlegrounds" may be familiar; it's a lyric from Keane's 'Sovereign Light Café'. The band members grew up hereabouts; look round and you'll also see Marley Lane and the North Trade Road which are also namechecked. The Sovereign Light Café itself is on Bexhill seafront.

From Battle, it's six miles (clearly signposted) to Hastings. The rest of this piece may be slightly lacking in objectivity as Hastings is where I was born and grew up and I still love the place. Alternatively, '1066 Country' may indeed be one of Britain's best-kept holiday secrets. Come and decide for yourself.

I recommend heading for the historic Old Town. There's plenty of parking - but payment terms are rigorously enforced - and a hill each side with and a Victorian cliff railway up each. The West Hill lift runs mainly through a tunnel and at the top there's a ruined castle, and caves



"Dating from 1935, Carlisle Parade car park was Britain's first purpose-built underground car park, and is now Grade 2 listed as a result."

which tourists are told were used by smugglers. This probably isn't true though as smugglers used small spaces to make discovery harder and minimise loss if caught.

The East Hill Lift is more impressive; it seems to almost climb vertically, giving unrivalled views across the old town and the fishing quarter. Unrivalled, that is, until you reach the top, and look out across the town and sea. The Old Town itself has the famous beach-launching fishing fleet plus lots of antique, junk and 'curiosity' shops plus the excellent Jerwood Gallery of contemporary art. And please take time to look around the Fisherman's Museum.

There's also a quite important car-related 'thing' hereabouts. Between the Old Town and the pier lies the Carlisle Parade underground car park. Dating from 1935, this was Britain's first purpose-built underground car park, and is now Grade 2 listed as a result. You may though struggle to actually use it - I did this time - as the bays are between sold posts and demonstrate how much bigger cars are now. »



And the car...

Talking of Big Cars brings me back to the AMG W210 I was using. When Rob handed me the keys, I was unsure what to expect – it was a car I knew little about, though he did say that I 'might be surprised'. He wasn't kidding.

To look at, it's nothing special – the larger AMG alloys make it look slightly lowered, but that's about it. But within five minutes of taking the wheel I knew that I wanted to take it somewhere – and as Sevenoaks to Hastings is one of my favourite driving routes in Britain, I was soon heading for the coast.

There are two ways of making a car go faster. One is to tune the standard engine to blazes. The other is to fit a bigger one. That's my preferred route – less stress – and essentially what happened here, though needless to say much else was also changed/ upgraded to suit.

The AMG W210 works, too. I'm not really a fast driver and therefore top speeds aren't massively relevant, but power is still handy. While in Hastings I headed East for a shortish circular trip taking in Fairlight, Winchelsea and Rye – as locals will know this includes two very significant hills with, incidentally, fantastic views if you go out via Fairlight and back on the A259. Both are definite second-gear jobs in

"Saying this car reminded me of an extremely well-executed home conversion probably sounds like I'm belittling it. I'm not.."

most cars, but the AMG W210 tackled both as though non-existent – it was the first time I have EVER accelerated when climbing Fairlight's Battery Hill or the A259 over Bachelor's Bump.

Saying this car reminded me of an extremely well-executed home conversion probably sounds like I'm belittling it. I'm not. Proper conversions take huge amounts of time, effort and skill, and they'll also usually be lots of 'ongoing development', but eventually, the car will be right in every respect. That is precisely what we have here – it all works very well indeed together, with the added reassurance of being designed and put together by people who really knew their stuff. Absolutely superb!

Things to see

TRANSPORT AND SIMILAR INTEREST

Kent and East Sussex Railway

www.kesr.org.uk 01580 765155

Spa Valley Railway, Tunbridge Wells

www.spavalleyrailway.co.uk 01892 537715

GENERAL INTEREST

Bodiam Castle

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/bodiam-castle

01580 830436

Chartwell

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/chartwell 01732 868381

Hastings Fisherman's Museum

www.ohps.org.uk 01424 461446

Hastings Jerwood Gallery

www.jerwoodgallery.org 01424 728377

Knole Park

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/knole 01732 462100

Scotney Castle

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/scotney-castle

01892 893820

TOURIST INFORMATION

Battle

www.battle-sussex.co.uk 01424 773721

Hastings

www.visit1066country.com 01424 451111

Tonbridge

www.tonbridgecastle.org 01732 770929

Tunbridge Wells

www.visittunbridgewells.com 01892 515675



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2003 MERCEDES-BENZ 350 Finished in dark blue metallic with light beige leather interior. 91,000 miles with a Full Mercedes Service History. Very high spec car with AMG Alloy wheels and Panoramic roof. **£9,495**



1980 MERCEDES 380 SL Finished in it's original and immaculate Thistle green with unmarked green cloth trim. Comes with Hard top, Soft top electric windows and Mexican hat alloys. Just about to turn over to 44,000 miles. Full service history and MOTs etc. Summer use car only and totally original. Any inspection welcome. Will satisfy the most discerning buyer. **£36,995**



2002 MERCEDES CL500 Finished in light metallic blue with grey hide, immaculate unmarked car very high spec 89,000 miles with Full Service History. SUPERB LOOKING AND DRIVING CAR, EXCEPTIONAL VALUE. **£7995**



2015 (15) MERCEDES-BENZ C CLASS C250 AUTO ESTATE This lovely well cared for Mercedes is finished in silver with Artico leather interior. Comes with a Full Franchise Service History, 2 previous owners and 40,000 miles. High Spec car with Navigation System, Panoramic Roof, Bluetooth, AMG Styling and much more **£18995**



1968 MERCEDES 250 SE Finished in immaculate Mercedes classic white with red MB Tex Trim. The car was imported from Botswana in 1998 by a titled gentleman who we purchased the car from in 2008 and looked after the car since then. The car is in immaculate condition, rust free and original. NOT MANY LIKE THIS..... **£19,995**



2014 (63) MERCEDES-BENZ C CLASS AMG C63 AUTO COUPE Stunning high performance car. Finished in black with full leather interior. Comes with a Full Service History, 2 previous owners and ONLY 18,500 miles. Panoramic Roof, Full Leather, Navigation System and AMG Styling. Superb looking car!..... **£28995**



1981 MERCEDES 230E AUTO Only one owner and 57,000 miles. Finished in immaculate Taigu beige with tan interior. Spec includes Auto Transmission and Power Steering. Very hard to find low mileage and one owner 123 Mercedes in this condition. **£12,995**



2001 MERCEDES 500 SEL Only 52,000 miles and mint condition, finished in silver with black hide. Full spec car including dual climate control, sun roof, electric seats including rear seat, black nappa leather. Full Service History. Very hard to find a better one..... **£7995**



1991 MERCEDES 190E 1.8 AUTO Finished in Smoke Silver with unmarked brown interior. Factory sunroof, lovely unmolested example. Only 65,000 miles and Full Service History. **£6995**



2000 BMW Z3 3.0 Finished in titan silver with black leather sports seats. With lots of Schnitzer modifications, including Schnitzer front bumper, 17inch Schnitzer wheels, Schnitzer exhaust system, Schnitzer handbrake and Schnitzer gear knob. 98,000 miles with a Full Service History. **£8995**



1966 VOLVO AMAZON 1225 This time Warp car has only covered 18,000 miles since new. The first owner, an elderly gentleman, had the car for 40 years and only covered 11,500 miles. Finished in Graphite Grey with red trim, the interior is in as new condition and retains plastic covering on the rear door cards and B posts. The body has never had any welding and is in a truly time Warp Condition. Best one on the market! **£23,995**

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