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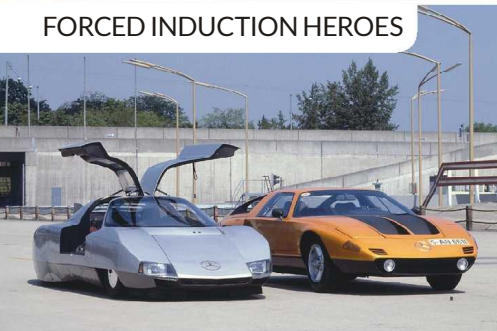
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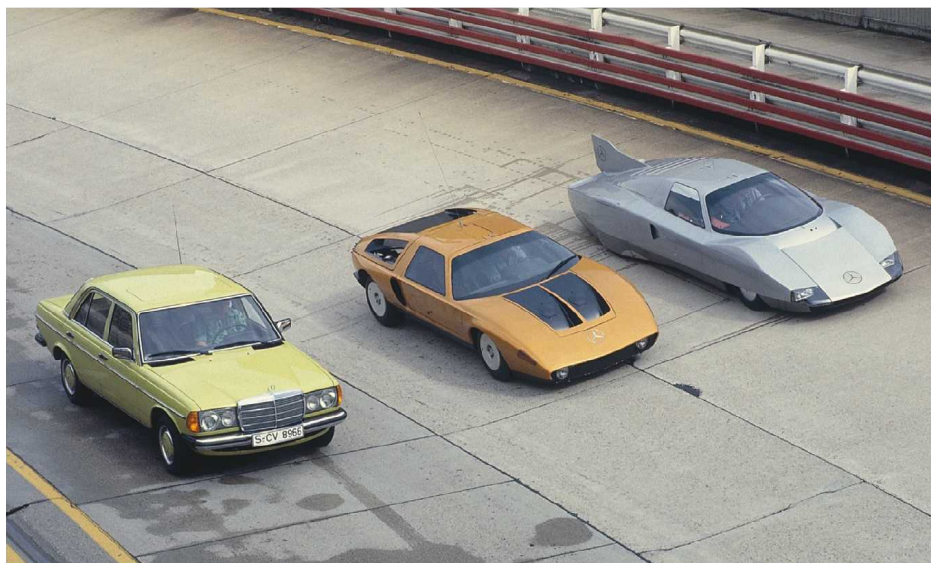
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Change can be a good thing. It's very useful for car parks if viewed in one way, or good for the mind if viewed in another. Change can help companies like Mercedes grow, too – by branching into SUVs with the ML-Class, it opened up a whole new market from which it has reaped rewards since. Sam Mace tells the story of the first ML from page 26.

Change can also prolong the life of a chassis, and give life to new models. Just as the SLK (Itself a reworked 190E) begat the Chrysler Crossfire, the W124 E-class was used to create the Ssangyong Chairman. This oddity stars in Modded Mercs this month; the work not of a tuner, but of an international conglomerate tasked with taking a Mercedes and making it better.

I'm thinking a lot about change this month, because changes are afoot too for Mercedes Driver. I've had a lot of fun launching and editing the mag, but it's time to move on to other opportunities – which means a shakeup is on the cards for Mercedes Driver too. Following this issue, it will move to a bimonthly format, with plenty of new features and series courtesy of new editor Dan Furr.

We've pulled out all the stops to make this one of the most diverse issues yet. Enjoy – and don't forget to let us know what you think. Our contact address is on page 15.



*Sam Skelton*

**Sam Skelton** Editor



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# » Contents

## ● Upfront

### 08 NEWS

All that's up to date in the world of MB.

### 14 LETTERS

Your thoughts on the world of the three pointed star.

### 16 FORCED INDUCTION

Sam Skelton charts the best of Mercedes' forced-induction history.

### 24 THE ML STORY

Sam Mace guides us through the history of Mercedes' first SUV.

### 36 SPANISH ADVENTURE

Jack O'Brien brings a 300D home from holiday. Was it duty-free, we wonder?

### 44 MODDED MERCS

The SSangyong Chairman goes under our microscope.



### 51 MERCS ON FILM

Andrew Roberts on the Mercedes heavy Bond film, On Her Majesty's Secret Service.

## ● Market News

### 52 BUYING AN R129

Things you need to know before buying the affordable classic SL.

### 60 ONE TO BUY

60 E220 COUPE  
70 CL500

### 66 MARKET ANALYSIS

Justin Lazic reports on the month in sales.

## ● Tech

### 72 FIX YOUR PARKING BRAKE

Peter Simpson tells us how to repair those oft-neglected parking brakes.



### 76 TECH TIPS

More handy hints from our man with the spanners.

## ● Enjoying your Mercedes

### 80 OUR MERCS

80 E220  
82 C180

### 84 YOUR MERCS

Andy Jones has gone from a W123 to a whole fleet.

### 86 CLUB NEWS

The latest news from the Mercedes Benz Club.

### 92 CLASSIC TOURING

Sam Mace visits the south-west.







16



44



52



36



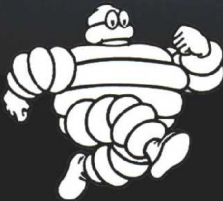


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**1996 Mercedes-Benz SL500 £29,750**

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# » NEWS

## Mercedes reveals all-electric SUV

**M**ercedes-Benz has pulled the wraps of its first full electric car – a large SUV that will target Tesla's Model X and the Jaguar i-PACE.

It has an 80kWh lithium-ion battery providing a 280-mile range, and two powerful motors for rapid acceleration and all-wheel drive traction.

As Mercedes-Benz's first EQ 'Electric Intelligence' model, the EQC is also the firm's first fully electric SUV – and the first fruits of its multi-billion-pound investment in the EQ line, which is its luxury electric vehicle line-up. It is due to go on sale in summer 2019.

"It is a genuine Mercedes-Benz," said Ola Kallenius, board member for R&D and Product Development. "It has classic attributes such as quality, safety and comfort".

But the EQC also has "dynamic performance", thanks to two electric motors at the front and rear axles, with a combined output of over 400bhp, 564lb ft of torque and an 'intelligent operating strategy' to optimise its electric range".

The EQC can be charged via conventional mains electricity and fast-charging networks, while owners will also get a Mercedes-Benz 'Wallbox', which will charge the car three times faster than a conventional fast-charging device.

"With the EQC – the first fully electric SUV from Mercedes-Benz – we are flipping the switch," said the firm's charismatic chairman and CEO Dieter Zetsche. "Electric drive is a major component in the mobility of the future."

"We are therefore investing more than ten billion euros in the expansion of our EQ model portfolio, and more than one billion euros in global battery production."



**Above:** EQC to launch in 2019







## Mercedes most at risk in thefts from cars with cherished plates

**C**ars with personalised numberplates are 50 per cent more likely to get broken into than those with conventional registration numbers, and Mercedes models are the ones most likely to attract the wrong kind of attention, according to research from price comparison website [moneysupermarket.com](http://moneysupermarket.com)

Approximately one in 10 cars in the UK wears a cherished plate, but approximately 12 per cent of those (around 375,000) are Mercedes models, making the brand

**Above:** 12% of cherished plates are on Mercedes models

the marque most likely to carry a cherished number, ahead of Porsche, Lexus, Jaguar and BMW.

The researchers believe that cars with private plates are targeted in the belief that they have the wealthiest owners, and are therefore likely to contain the most valuable items in 'smash and grab' thefts.

"If you do choose to get a cherished number, there are a few things to consider," explained Kevin Pratt, at MoneySupermarket.

"Firstly, you need to ensure that your insurer is aware of your new

plate details, so it can be reflected in your policy - your cover could be invalidated otherwise.

"Owners of a personalised plate should also be conscious that in the event their vehicle is written-off or stolen and they make a claim on their insurance, the car will become the property of the insurer, along with the plate.

"To avoid this happening, it's vital the driver tells the DVLA and also the insurer that they wish to keep the plate. If they don't do this and the car is sent to the scrap yard or the plate is sold on, they'll lose all rights to use the personalised plate in the future," Pratt added.

Despite the high number of people who own a cherished number, data reveals that a large portion of Brits feel they send out a negative message.

A third automatically class someone with a personalised plate as a 'poser', 27% believe they are an 'attention seeker', and one in four think they have 'more money than sense'.

British motorists spent over £111 million on personalized number plates in 2017.

## Barker-bodied boat tail Mercedes wins Concours of Elegance

A unique Barker-bodied Mercedes-Benz S-Type was voted the 'Most Beautiful Car at the Show' at this year's Concours of Elegance, held in the grounds of London's Hampton Court Palace.

The car, which we featured in Issue 7 of Mercedes Driver, came with a unique boat tail body and hadn't put a tyre on British soil in 60 years.

Originally owned by British Racing Drivers' Club co-founder Earl Howe, the car was fitted with a revolutionary alloy body which incorporated aircraft-inspired aluminium side pods crafted by English



coachbuilders Barker.

Many of its first owner's specifications had been lost, but the car has now been returned to its former glory thanks to a recent restoration.

Concours of Elegance Managing Director, Andrew Evans, said: "The Mercedes S-Type 'Boat Tail' is such a special car, and we were incredibly privileged to have it at Concours of Elegance 2018. This car hadn't turned a wheel in the UK during many people's lifetimes, so it was an opportunity for our visitors to come and see a real piece of motoring history."

As ever with the Concours of Elegance, a huge amount of money was raised for the event's chosen charities this year; Springfield Youth Club Hackney and the College of St. George.

## » NEWS

# Speedboat reborn as Mercedes-Benz 250 CE

**A** Bulgarian artist has retrimmed an anonymous Saudi Arabian entrepreneur's Mercedes-Benz 250 CE with wood from his Riva Aquamarine speedboat, after its remains were discovered 30 years after it had been stolen.

The ebony veneer adorns the dashboard, doors and centre console of the car, which also has a hand-stitched blue leather interior. Both the car and the vessel were bought new by the owner in 1970, so when the partially destroyed boat was discovered in Cairo after being missing since 1988, he decided to combine the two.

The unique interior was the work of Bulgarian artist and sculptor Atanas Vilner, after the owner had both the car and the remains of the boat shipped to him for the unique project.

Vilner first selected some usable pieces of ebony from the boat's deck, combining them with walnut and then pressing them into veneer in shapes required for the car.



Vilner then added some individual touches – a Becker Mexico retro stereo, blue leather seats and door cards, blue glowing speakers and a hand-perforated Alcantara headlining.

“We used perforation because of the original leather lining, to retain the classic atmosphere despite the technical fabric,” says Vilner. Brown seatbelts to match the veneer and

a unique blue and black leather steering wheel complete the one-off cabin, while Vilner also added a unique leather holdall to match the interior – a gift to the owner from his studio.

“We’ve created a remarkable car. An automobile which says a lot for its owner and which is a temple for the spirit of his beloved boat,” added Vilner.

## New BRABUS G Class revealed

Mercedes tuning specialist BRABUS has pulled the wraps off its high-performance variant of the new G-Class.

The Brabus B40 is powered by a 500bhp 4.0-litre V8 and has 524lb ft (710Nm) of torque, giving it a sub 5.0-second 0-60 time. The top speed is limited to 130mph.

There are a number of BRABUS styling signatures. At the front, it gets a beefier, lower bumper and a unique BRABUS grille, along with a huge carbon fibre air scoop.

It also gets LED lighting and a purposeful light bar over the windscreen, plus a distinctive roof spoiler and BRABUS –



specific spare wheel carrier.

20-inch alloys are standard, though optional wheels of up to 23 inches are available for the full bling effect. The look is rounded off with a distinctive stainless steel exhaust system with butterfly valves that can be opened and closed to alter the acoustic accompaniment.

Changes to the cabin are more subtle, with BRABUS carpet mats, aluminium pedals and illuminated door sills, along with some unique BRABUS badges.

Prices have yet to be announced.





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**S320 CDI**

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# » NEWS

## In Brief

The latest Mercedes G-Class G65 AMG has been subject to one of the most unusual recalls in history, after being declared too fast in reverse gear. The US National Highway Safety Authority has insisted that the company fits a speed limiter to the 612bhp 6.0-litre V12 SUV as it was considered to have too much power when travelling backwards.

A Smart car has been given a Back to the Future-inspired makeover. Despite not being roadworthy, or able to hit 88mph, the Smart Coupe does boast gull-wing doors and a "Bic capacitor". Mark Enright, who runs a model and prop firm in Swindon, said the DeLorean was the perfect choice for the 1980s blockbuster, but for the 21st Century it had to be the little city car. "Building this car was so much fun that I have decided to create a collection of Smart cars, built and inspired by iconic films," he said.

A Mercedes-Benz AMG CLK GTR (codenamed W297) entered for auction by RM Sotheby's last month achieved a record \$4.51 million (£3.49m). The car was number 11 of 35 road cars produced to homologate Mercedes's GT racing car in 1999.



## Unique Gullwing stolen from Nürburgring

**A** £250,000 reward is being offered for information leading to the recovery of a unique Mercedes-Benz 300SL 'Gullwing', which was stolen from a hotel car park near the world-famous Nürburgring racing circuit during the hottest weekend of the summer.

The one-off 300SL, which is well known on the classic Mercedes scene as the 'Californian Outlaw' due to its extensive modifications, was taken on August 11 from the car park of the Dorint Hotel, which is on the outskirts of the iconic German race track. The theft took place overnight, during the Oldtimer Grand Prix classic car race weekend.

Local police believe the car was taken between 1:30am and 10am local time.

As well as its extensive customisation, the car has a lowered

**Above:** A customised 300SL has been stolen from the Nürburgring

roofline, side exhausts, re-profiled bumpers, distinctive 'double bubble' roof and a tan ostrich leather interior, which would make it impossible to resell publicly. There isn't another like it, so police and enthusiasts are both baffled as to its disappearance.

Experts believe the car is mostly likely to be broken and rare parts from it to be sold on the black market, due to its high profile provenance.

The Gullwing is believed to be worth in the region of £2 million, though a true valuation is impossible due to its uniquely customized status.

Any information leading to the recovery of the 300SL should be directed to the Mayen Police Department on +49 (0)2651-801-0, or the Adenau Police Inspectorate on +49 (0)2691-925-0.



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## Letters

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Congratulations on issue seven! Have just finished reading and the mix of articles was ideal, I particularly found the A Class and AMG articles interesting. The W168 was always an interesting design and far more suited to today's motoring than the latest overtly large (and ugly!) behemoth.

**Rob Glenister**, *via email*

I was interested to read your Classic Touring piece in Issue 7, where you took an S124 to St Helens. I wasn't even aware of the twinning arrangement between the two places, but are you aware that Stuttgart is also twinned with my own home city?

Stuttgart and Cardiff have been twin cities since 1955, but for

different reasons. It was originally the two cities' universities that developed a cultural exchange, but this led to various other synergies – culinary, cultural and academic.

In 2015, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the arrangement, I was one of the singers in a choir that welcomed a group of traditional dancers to Cardiff, where the two countries held a weekend of celebrations including traditional dance and cookery. I remember one of the dance troupes arriving in a vintage Mercedes-Benz bus, and I remarked then that they had brought a piece of Stuttgart with them.

Today, Cardiff Business School is one area of the university that is heavily involved in the automotive

industry, and several Cardiff students have gone on to do placements with Mercedes-Benz and Porsche due to the Stuttgart links.

You should pay us a visit for your next touring feature, and bring another classic Mercedes to to the Welsh capital!

**Owain Gladstone-Jones**, *Cardiff*

Thanks for the feature on AMG's first production models. I had an early E36 coupe back in 2000, and I still miss it. I've moved away from Mercedes since, but as I come to retire perhaps I might look for another E36 to keep me busy!

**Ted Standen**, *Worcester*



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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

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# *BLOWN* THUNDER

Not only did Mercedes give us the diesel car, it pioneered the now-common turbo-diesel pairing. To commemorate 40 years of the 300SD, we take a look at Mercedes' best forced induction models.

---











## Forced Induction

**Words:**  
Sam Skelton

# Mercedes C111 DIESEL

**W**hen people think of the Mercedes C111 concept, they think of rotary engines.

Yet of the three C111 concepts, it was only the first which featured rotary power. The second and third were experimental testbeds into performance diesel technology, the latter of which employed a turbocharger to boost output of its OM617 five cylinder engine.

The second generation model was impressive by diesel standards, but the engineers felt that just a little more could be achieved if the engine was taken slightly beyond the optimal parameters for road use. So it was reworked; the wheelbase lengthened and the track narrowed for efficiency, concealed wheels to prevent interrupted airflow, a low nose and a tapering rear complete with stability fin.

Courtesy of its aerodynamic

body (a Cd figure of 0.19 was comparable to the GM EV-1 and the VW XL1) in 1978 it became the first diesel engine car to reach the 200mph milestone at the Nardo ring test circuit. Over 311 miles, it averaged 200.1mph. On the third driver's stint at night, a rear tyre burst – Mercedes was forced to adopt its reserve car as a result of the damage. This worked to its advantage; the reserve car turned out to be slightly quicker and slightly more economical, ensuring five more laps between refuelling and thus more chance to maintain higher speeds. Yes, it averaged just 17mpg, but that was at 200mph – an astounding feat for what was a near-production specification 3.0 diesel engine. It established nine average speed records – not just for a diesel engine, but absolutely.

Turbocharged diesels became a production reality later in 1978, courtesy of the W116 300SD.

## Mercedes C111-III average speed records established:

100 km distance: 316.484 km/h (196.7mph)  
 100 miles distance: 319.835 km/h (198.7mph)  
 500 km distance: 321.860 km/h (200mph)  
 500 miles distance: 320.788 km/h (199.3mph)  
 1000 km distance: 318.308 km/h (197.8mph)  
 1000 miles distance: 319.091 km/h (198.3mph)  
 1 hour 321.843 km/h (200mph)  
 6 hours 317.976 km/h (197.6mph)  
 12 hours 314.463 km/h (195.4mph)



## Forced Induction

# Mercedes 350SD

**T**he W116 series of 1972 was the S-class which really put the breed on the map. The favoured car of national leaders across the globe, it also begat the high performance 450SEL 6.9, and marked the end of Friedrich Geiger's time in the styling department. But one of its less well-remembered achievements was that of introducing the world to the concept of a turbocharged diesel road car.

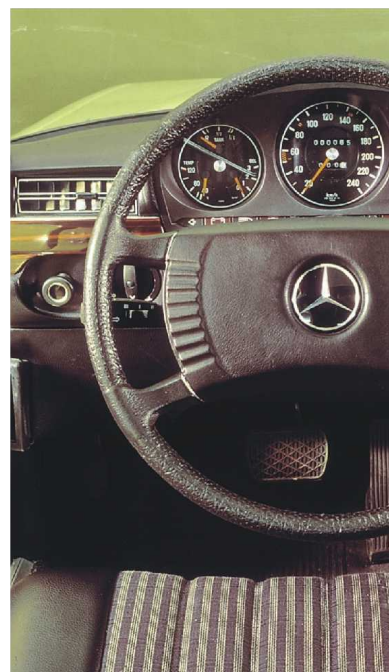
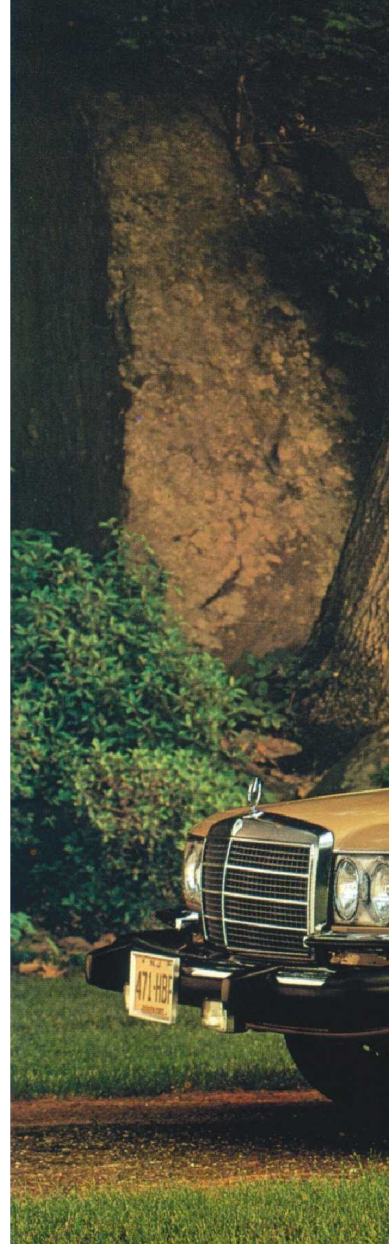
Mercedes had extensive experience of diesel engine road cars, having pioneered the breed in 1936 with the 260D. It learned, however, from its experimentations with the C111 sports concept. Taking the 3.0 five cylinder diesel from the W123 300D, Mercedes added a turbocharger to boost power from 87bhp to 121bhp and torque from 127lb.ft to 170lb.ft. The resultant engine was more than up to the task of propelling the big saloon, starting a line of economical S-classes which offered those the world over the chance to

enjoy economy in style.

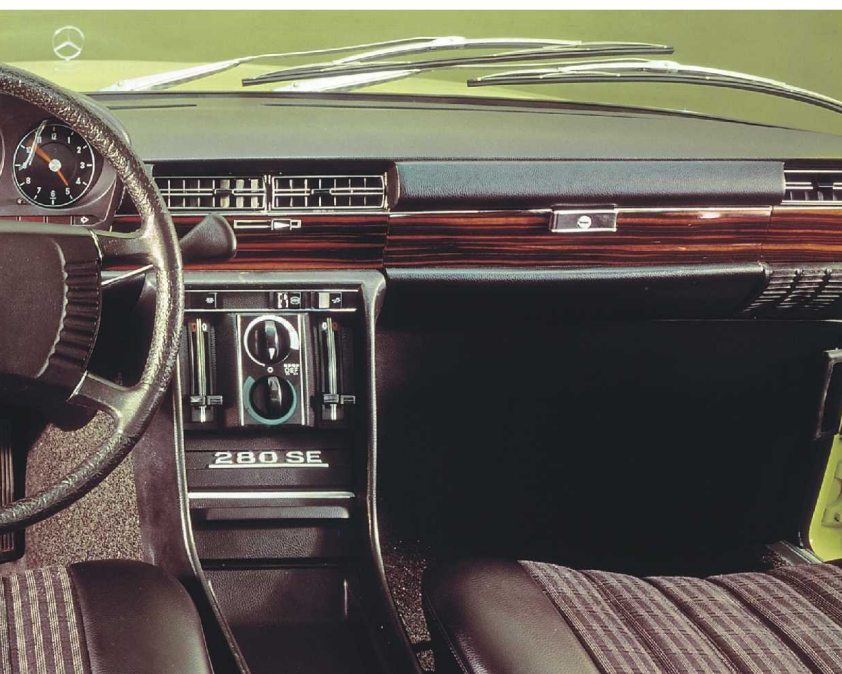
The turbo diesel engine soon found its way into other, smaller Mercedes; appearing in the W123 range and later, the W124. It took until the W210 for the UK to get a turbo diesel option; Britain was not traditionally a large diesel market until the 1990s, and while the 190D, 250D and 300D models were offered during the 1980s, it wasn't felt that a larger or faster diesel would sell in sufficient numbers to engineer right hand drive.

Initially, the 300SD was only available in the North American market; a move which proved uncharacteristically popular in a petrol-loving country and prompted Cadillac to launch its 1980 Seville with no petrol option until public pressure forced a rethink. The UK didn't get a diesel engine S-class until the common-rail V6 S320CDi W220, but the five cylinder turbo diesel introduced in 1978 effectively served the S-class line until 1999.

<i>Statistics</i>	1978 Mercedes-Benz 300SD
Power	121bhp
Torque	170lb.ft
Max Speed	108mph
Gearbox	4spd manual
Economy	27mpg















## Forced Induction

# Mercedes SLK230K


**W**hen developing a small sports car, Mercedes faced an issue. How to give it power without adding too much weight. Originally planned to have the 2.8-litre straight six from the W124, the SLK was found to be too nose heavy with this engine. And yet the 150bhp of the 2.2-litre M111 just wasn't enough. The solution: Once again, Mercedes turned to forced induction.

This time, rather than the turbocharger, Mercedes decided supercharging was the way forward. This avoided any issues with lagging – as turbochargers are exhaust driven, there is a time delay between putting your foot down and getting the extra power, while the engine-driven supercharger is there from the first instant.

In order to ensure economy, the supercharger installation in the SLK used a clutch to engage the supercharger under load. Unlike a conventional permanently driven supercharger, this

meant that the drag of the supercharger and the additional fuel and air were not present except under acceleration. The result: six cylinder performance on full throttle with four-cylinder economy while cruising. It was a success, and was to drive the direction of Mercedes' smaller engines for more than a decade.

Supercharged M111s were soon fitted to the C-class saloon too. The 2.3-litre was fitted to the first CLKs, while 1.8 and 2.0 supercharged engines were produced to offset power against economy for successive generations of the C-class model. The efficiency of Mercedes' smallest saloon and mid sized coupe could have been significantly lower had it not been for the supercharger work carried out for SLK.

Mercedes liked the effect – and used superchargers to good effect in performance AMG models too. The SL55 AMG used a supercharger to give its 5.4 litre V8 a little extra shove while maintaining respectable touring economy. 

<i>Statistics</i>	1996 SLK230 Kompressor
Power	194bhp
Torque	207lb.ft
Max Speed	144mph
Gearbox	5 speed manual
Economy	30mpg




# Mercedes A45AMG TURBO

**W**hile the A45 AMG is still too recent to have earned its place in Mercedes' pantheon of greats, we feel that this hot hatch is still worthy of inclusion in our celebration of forced-induction Mercedes. At launch in 2013, its 360bhp 2.0 turbocharged four cylinder petrol engine was the most powerful production four-cylinder engine ever produced – a feat only bettered by Mercedes itself with the 376bhp revision of 2015.

These revised cars drove even better, too. While the earlier cars were noted for slightly flat chassis, the later cars matched their extra power to a far more dynamic chassis. The 2015-2018 A45 AMGs are one of the best high

performance hatchbacks money can buy.

Mercedes had an ambitious target in mind, and one it achieved twice courtesy of this model.

It wanted to produce the most powerful hot hatchback in the world. And rumour has it; the next A45 AMG will break the 400bhp barrier just to make sure. 

<i>Statistics</i>	2018 A45 AMG
Power	360bhp
Torque	327lb.ft
Max Speed	155mph
Gearbox	7spd manual
Economy	27mpg



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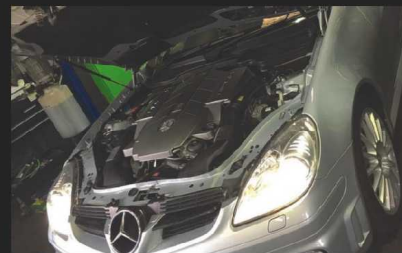


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The background of the entire page is a scenic landscape. In the foreground, there is a river with some white water rapids, and a large, out-of-focus green bush or tree on the right side. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains under a clear sky. The text is overlaid on this image.

# American DREAM

The ML was the first SUV by Mercedes-Benz,  
but also its first car built in America.

We tell its story

---



"Mercedes anticipated that around 50% of all W163 sales would be made in the US, so the choice to make it in the USA was never really up for debate."







## Mercedes ML-class

Words:  
Sam Mace



**T**wo decades ago, Mercedes launched the first generation M-Class. Traditionalists may have found its soft, bulky lines hard to stomach, but nobody could deny that it was an important car for the brand - the first SUV to bear the three pointed star.

The G-Wagen may have been in production since 1979, but it was always a utilitarian vehicle, even after Mercedes attempted to civilize it. Mercedes had to make a totally different product, especially if it was to continue to be a strong force in the all important US market.

By the early '90s, SUV sales in the United States were booming. In 1990, they accounted for almost 7% of all US car sales, representing 929,000 units and rising to a mammoth 1,750,000 in 1995. Mercedes were already looking to broaden its appeal beyond a conservative core market, and the USA was its biggest customer outside of Germany, so it could ill afford to ignore the SUV segment any longer. In 1992, work commenced to design a true Mercedes SUV. But how was such a car going to look?

Mercedes considered different design proposals from studios in Japan, California and Germany. Subsequent designs varied wildly, ranging from a slightly softened G-Wagen look, to the more "fun" two door proposal that came out of California, which Mercedes was quick to kill off, owing to low consumer interest.

Eventually, it was a German proposal that was given the green light by Bruno Sacco, Mercedes-Benz's Chief of Design. Sacco felt that it was the only proposal that combined the then current Mercedes design language with the visual toughness associated with an off-road vehicle.

Meanwhile, California's efforts were not to be wasted. They were tasked with developing a concept car to preview the production M-Class at the 1996 Detroit Auto Show, to be known as the All-Activity Vehicle, or AAV.

Styling the M-Class was far from the hardest challenge to project posed: Merced had to construct a completely new factory to build its SUV in. Its existing production facilities were already running at capacity, so from the start it was known that a



## Mercedes ML-class

dedicated M-Class factory would have to be built.

Mercedes anticipated that around 50% of all W163 sales would be made in the US, so the choice to make it in the USA was never really up for debate.

Mercedes considered 30 states, all of which were keen to attract the German car building giant to their town. Far from being viewed as an invader, Mercedes brought with it the promise of up to 1,500 jobs, as well as being seen as a major source of pride for whichever state could home the new factory.

Alabama emerged victorious, owing to a variety of positive factors: the site would be located in the town of Vance, Tuscaloosa, which boasted excellent links to sea and airports. Alabama also homed a willing and able workforce, and a community hungry for the project. Sweetening the deal, Alabama's state government would donate Mercedes a plot to build to factory on.

Many of new factory's staff moved in before it was finished, working out of caravans on the construction site. Among them, was new recruit, Thomas Struthwolf. An enthusiast of SUVs, off-road driving, and an admirer of the three pointed star, Struthwolf joined Mercedes's Tuscaloosa team as Marketing Coordinator.

He recalled an atmosphere of "nervous excitement" in the months and weeks leading up to the M-Class's debut. "It wasn't a kind of 'oh my God, I can't believe we're doing this, we shouldn't be doing this' kind of nervousness, it was more of a 'I can't believe we're finally making this happen!' kind of nervousness," recalled Struthwolf. "There was no top-down management during the project. Everybody was doing what they had to do to make it a success. It was an amazing thing to be part of."

Struthwolf was part of a new status quo for Mercedes. The W163 project was not only a break away from the traditional Mercedes passenger car, it was a break away from the traditional



way of designing a Mercedes.

Previously the Mercedes design process would be akin to a relay race: one team would do their share of the work, before handing the project over to the next one.

For the M-Class, the design process was executed with different departments such as engineering, finance and styling all working in synergy. This would lead the way for all future cars. Mercedes had also been worried about not getting its first SUV right, and future-proofed itself while designing the new car. The decision was made to use a "body on frame" construction method. Completed monocoque body shells, engineered to take 70% of operating stress were lowered onto chassis rails, which accommodated the suspension and steering gear. This construction



method may have seemed odd, or even old fashioned, but it would allow Mercedes to be more flexible if they needed to make changes to the car in the future.

The manufacturing process itself would differ at the Tuscaloosa plant too, and the site was effectively used as a working test-bed to trial new ways of building Mercedes passenger cars, such as the "just in time" production method. Outsourcing the production of more complex and intricate parts such as seats and dashboard assemblies to trusted suppliers was also a new



UPFRONT











## Mercedes ML-class

step. These parts were delivered to Tuscaloosa and installed as one complete piece - in some cases the process was complete less than three hours after the supplier was given the order.

In 1997 America received the first production cars, with Europe and the UK later getting them in the Autumn. Critical reception in the UK was, at times, lukewarm. While most journalists found its on-road performance good, it did get some criticism for its build quality, with early cars being blasted by the likes of Jeremy Clarkson for their nasty plastics and large panel gaps. Contemporary journalists may have found these points easier to forgive had Mercedes's pricing been less ambitious. Prices started at £32,000 and could easily run over £40,000 if you got tick-happy with the option boxes.

Initially your choice was limited to just the ML320. Using the 3.2 variant of Mercedes's new M112 family of V6 engines, some pundits criticised it for not being smooth enough.

But more variety was on the way. A 4.3 V8 M-Class debuted the following year, wearing the ML430 moniker, as well as the Europe-only V6 diesel ML270 CDI and the miserly inline four ML230. Only available as a manual, the entry level car produced an anemic 150bhp which had to shift close to two tons.

Partially vindicating the W163 was its off-road capability. The press couldn't resist taking it off road, pitching it against established rivals such as the Land Rover Discovery and Jeep Grand Cherokee. Given that it was never meant to be a hard-core mud plugger, it coped well on off road tests, going everywhere that the Jeeps and Land Rovers could.

Driven on an off-road course at Tuscaloosa, which he designed, Struthwolf felt that the W163 outperformed many domestic SUVs.

Some contemporary road testers in the States clearly felt the same

## "Mercedes offered owners optional off-road driving courses."

way as Struthwolf, with Motor Trend magazine crowning it "Truck of The Year" in 1998, praising its ability to stay composed on any terrain.

Mercedes had confidence in the W163's four wheel drive capability, and owners of the M-Class were encouraged to take it off-road, and Mercedes offered owners optional off-road driving courses.

These courses were more than just a marketing gimmick, explained Struthwolf: "Safety was a big part of the M-Class's appeal, and we didn't want people to go off road in it without knowing what they were doing, and getting into trouble. We wanted them to do it properly."

In general, America was far happier with the M-Class than the UK ever was, and Struthwolf couldn't recall getting any complaints from US consumers about the car's build quality. On a personal level, he was very fond of it, describing himself as being "in love" with it.

While the M-Class may have won fans in its first year of production, Mercedes themselves later acknowledged that the W163's build quality wasn't beyond improvement, and invested \$600,000,000 in the still young in American plant to further increase build standards, coinciding with a mid-life facelift in 2001.

The most obvious changes were on the outside, with clear light lenses, fresh alloy wheel designs and new bumper moldings - but perhaps the most important changes were on the

inside. Mercedes's mission to improve the W163's quality were evident in a better trimmed interior, which benefitted from soft touch plastic on various touch points inside the car, such as the glove box lid and door trims. Buyers of facelifted cars enjoyed redesigned seats, which were more comfortable, offered more adjustment, as well as being available with a memory function for the first time. Some changes were not visible - but did show how committed Mercedes were improving its SUV. The inner floor pan was thicker, designed to cut out road noise. The doors now had a secondary sill to combat not only road noise, but wind noise, too.

At this stage Mercedes were probably pleased that it made the W163's chassis easy to adapt: the front body mounts were reinforced to improve its already good crash worthiness, and a new, improved gearbox was offered. M-Class drivers could now manually flick between gears using the automatic gear lever, thanks to Mercedes's TouchShift function.

The real news was the introduction of the AMG-tuned ML55. Probably the W163's finest hour, these hotrod 4x4s beat Porsche and BMW to the draw with a true high performance SUV. The W163 could stay in production until 2005, until it was replaced by the W164.

Nobody can deny that the W163 is a controversial car - but it is an extremely important one in Mercedes's history. When it launched the M-Class, what it was really doing was embarking on a massive project to exploit every market niche. It's only twenty years on that Mercedes have conceded that it may have finally found every niche that there is to fill. Without the M-Class and the niche-busting vehicles that followed it, the brand may not be in the strong position it is today. The W163's time in the doldrums may not be over yet, but it was vital for the brand's long term growth and survival.



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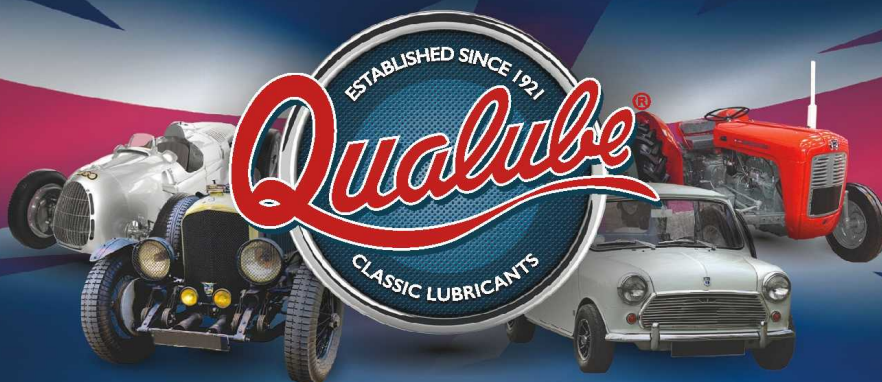


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 seats, 2 owners, 6 main dealer services. £11995









# VIVA BENZ!

Most people bring a teatowel or photos back from holidays.  
Jack O'Brien brought a Mercedes 300D...











## Mercedes 300D

Words: Jack O'Brien

**R**ight, as the title suggests, I've completely lost the plot, thrown caution to the wind and bought a 1983 300D W123, 1700 miles from home... I'll make this plain, I didn't plan when I joined my family on holiday in Spain this summer to buy a car. In fact, 10 minutes before seeing the W123 for the first time, I didn't intend on buying a car and driving it home!

I'm sure lots of us when on holiday in Europe have seen the ocean of old Mercs available and thought "I wonder if I can fit one in my hand-luggage"?

This particular Wednesday morning we had to take our dog to the vet for approval that she was fit to travel back to England on Sunday, and on the way there, drove past said 300D; parked at the side of the road with "Se Vende" in the window. Naturally, while formalities were occurring in the vets and Tilly was given a clean bill of health I looked over the W123. 390,000km on the odometer and in gorgeous Champagne Gold with Biscuit MB Tex, cogs were turning in my head. the car looked straight, just a little bubble at the bottom of the rear screen, but sills like new, with no horrible weld patches like most in the UK, the doors were good, the arches (although covered with nasty chrome arches) all feel fresh and underneath looks almost new. The brake lines are all original and it's clearly never been welded. Find a UK W123 like that!

I digress, I call the number, and mercifully the vendor speaks good English, he's busy in the day but I can meet him back at the car at 5:30. The day went very slowly as I weighed up the pros on cons of my hastily formed plan and thought how terrible an idea it was. I thought the car would most likely be knackered and that 390,000 km it will drive like a nail, have passed through all sorts of owners and have been badly maintained.

Arriving 10 minutes early to find a smartly dressed elderly chap stood by the car pacing the pavement. Awkward

**"I looked over the W123.  
390,000km on the  
odometer and in gorgeous  
Champagne Gold with  
Biscuit MB Tex, cogs were  
turning in my head."**

introductions over, it turns out he's owned the car for 24 years, buying it from a friend that had the car from new and had only covered 51,000 KM in it in 11 years. Our man had another 300D before this, naturally, no one ever only owns one Merc; in which he'd covered 240,000 KM but bought this because it was much lower mileage and had power windows! In the 24 years that followed, the W123 had been loyal for over 339,000 KM and only ever needed serviceable items (an oil and filter change every 5000km he tells me are essential to a happy diesel). Its apparently never broken, yielded, or misbehaved. The only issue has been that the temperature gauge failed due to a dodgy switch / sender unit and as piece of mind he's fitted an additional coolant temp gauge as well as repairing the original. Nothing like belt and braces.

I have another look around it in much more detail and luckily the rear parcel shelf doesn't look too bad, although it'll want the screen out and a little cleaning up. It's not holed and rotten like most of them are and the OM617 purrs like a kitten. I was shocked when I opened the bonnet how clean it was, supposedly getting cleaned 3 times a year to remove and dust and nastiness, and it's certainly done the trick. Clean oil, clean coolant, nice rubber hoses, a fresh battery and nice brass diesel injector pipes. I'm liking it more and more... We had a nice drive of about 20 minutes, it held

its temperature nicely, makes good smooth power, the clutch feels fine, it shifts through all 5 gears well and it rides better than a modern Range Rover, I'm smitten, I've got to have it!

We agree a reasonable deal, and all I had to do was go to the local Gistoria (Spanish public office) the next day with my passport and driving licence in order to make a contract of sale and transfer ownership, I went expecting it to be an hours long process and require all sorts of form filling and pain, but it was remarkably straight forward.

That afternoon, I cleaned it up a little, changed the oil and filter, checked everything else again and then it was all ready to start the long drive home... Oh, I should mention my mate Leigh was flying out at that moment to join me on this ludicrous adventure. What could go wrong?

On Leigh's arrival, we fit the replacement bonnet star he bought with him, christen the car Donald after its previous owner, who really was quite an inspiring character. He was one of those people that you meet now and then that leave a truly lasting impression, but that's one for another day.

Let's recap slightly, I collected Donald on Thursday lunchtime, it's now 08:30 on Friday and we're setting off on a 2500km jaunt across Europe. As we join the AP-7 at San Juan and have our first real opportunity to take the 300D to motorway speeds, it rapidly becomes apparent that we've got







## Mercedes 300D

a cracking old car. At first, we cruise at around 110 / 120kmh, with little to no wind noise and almost no driveline interference. 390,000km and no diff whine, the story of regular and thorough maintenance and ringing true as we breeze our way north to Barcelona. At one point we thought our idea had been a really stupid one, something started knocking

you fire it up, if it has good compression as Donald does, it should fire almost instantly and settle in to a smooth idle, producing no smoke and making an unmistakable noise. As you drive, the sound is actually very pleasant, as hilarious as the notion is; you can kind of hear a little of an Audi Quattro or Volvo 850R as you rev it out in second gear. I'm really not a diesel fan by and

**"Just about acceptable progress can be made in the 300D, the engine is happy to rev and has a really nice delivery."**

and rattling, causing much alarm as it sounded teeth grindingly crank based... Luckily, it turned out to be the spare hub caps we had it the boot that had moved and started rattling around.

Temperature gauge sitting pretty at 80 degrees, and with the weather a little less "scorchio" than the rest of the week, we're not cooking with the windows up and relying on the blower to keep things civilised. As we climb in to the Pyrenees our 96bhp handicap makes itself known, with regular downshifts to fourth as the traffic we were becoming confident enough to sail past on the flat regains its lead with ease. The OM617 3000cc 5-cylinder diesel engine is something of Mercedes Benz folk law, tales of the "million-mile diesel" can be found all over the internet and with advocates such as Kent Burgsma of Mercedessource, both Leigh and I were keen to see what the fuss is about with this old lump.

While it's not desperately powerful, it's not totally pedestrian. Just about acceptable progress can be made in the 300D, the engine is happy to rev and has a really nice delivery. When

large but this engine has well and truly performed a charm offensive and by the time we arrived at the traffic jam that was the French border, I couldn't think of another W123 I'd rather be in!

We queued all the way through Steve Wright's Golden Oldies and well in to Serious Jockin' (No G!) to get in to France, and as we crossed the police checkpoint at the first Péage we encountered our only issue with Donald on our trip. The fuse for the blower motor, which had been working overtime all day, finally blew.

Fuse replaced, and our final driver change for the day made, we pressed on to our overnight stop at Montauban taking a slightly scenic route diverting from the A61 motorway and travelling on some great flowing A roads through the last bit of the Pyrenees. In the early evening sunlight, in that stunning part of the world, the 300D was making itself known as quite a special old car.

Well rested, and back on the road at 06:30, Donald firing instantly after one warm of the glow plugs, we were treated to the sunrise and made great progress in the cool morning















## Mercedes 300D

air. I must say, the A20 motorway in France, which carries you all the way from Toulouse to Paris was a highlight. Very little traffic, largely straight and flat, the kilometres were flying down. We started the day roughly 640km from Paris and by 11:30 were joining the N104 ring road around the capital.

A spot of advice for anyone travelling around Paris, sat navs (including Google Maps and Waze), all try and send you basically through the middle of the city, which is a complete nightmare. I've done it before and it's chaos. Regardless of what the sat nav's ETA says, you'll add at least an hour and a half to your day and when you have a ferry or euro tunnel to catch; it's not ideal. What you should do is join the N104 and go around the east side of the city on this road, which becomes the A104; latterly following signs for the A1 and Lille. It's slightly daunting following your nose when Google is constantly trying to re-route you but when it finally works out which way you're trying to go you should see your ETA (of Calais) fall by at least 10 minutes. The signs on this route are dead easy to follow, and providing you aren't haring round (you're down to a 100kmh limit anyway) you won't miss a turn and as you're passing under the runway at Charles de Gaulle Airport, having not had to stop in traffic or slow down significantly once; you'll thank me!

Free of Paris and on the A1, which is basically a rat race to Lille, full of Dutch people doing twice the speed limit and you're easily in to a 150kmh cruise. We make our final pit stop and driver change in France around an hour north, our ETA of 15:10 holding steady. (I don't trust Google Maps for routes, especially abroad, but the live traffic can be a god send when you're pressed for time and the French are falling off their motorways) Our crossing requires us in Calais for 15:35 and as Leigh pilots us towards 2000km on our trip, we reflect somewhat on our trip and our

wonderful W123. If I hadn't come along, it would have still been sat on the street in San Juan, potentially awaiting what it's owner feared, being bought by a Moroccan and ending up in North Africa or even broken up for spares as so many old Spanish Merc's have. There's no denying we feel slightly guilty for removing the car from a warm dry climate, with salt free roads and a perfect environment for no rust and bringing it back to the land of plated sills and glory; but it's definitely for the best.

We roll in to Calais half an hour ahead of schedule and once through customs have just enough time to get a coffee and consider the merits of walking along and un-plugging all the electric cars before Donald boards the strange soviet looking train to Blighty. Landing back at 16:00 BST, we tank up, work out that we've achieved 37mpg and head for the M20, Dartford and then the A1 home.

It's strange to think that of all the miles we covered in Europe, our only minor hold-up was around the French / Spanish border, which given increased Police checks isn't surprising but almost as soon as you're back on English soil it's bumper to bumper traffic on almost every major motorway in the country. There are two rather opposing ways to look at this, the easy trap that most of us fall in to is the "what are all these road works about", "why's it 50 here" or "what's this completely moronic imbecile in the Peugeot doing in the third lane at 65 mph when every other lane to his left is empty for as far as the eye can see." Or, you can think that while the roads in mainland Europe are a joy, there are so many reasons to be thankful that we live in Britain. Our culture and our history are un-matched, and our way of life is; or at least was, admired the world over. While the M25 might be snarled up with traffic, I can't wait for Donald to be wearing a GB licence plate and exploring this fine isle in laid back Diesel style.



UPFRONT





# *Seoul* MATE

While not a tuner car, the Ssangyong Chairman  
still hides Mercedes roots.







## Modded Mercs

**W**hile this series usually looks at aftermarket Mercedes conversions, there is more to the world of modified Mercs than that. Not only can platform sharing lead to sister models, but it can cross into other brands as a means of getting the greatest value from an old platform. While everybody knows the Chrysler Crossfire is a Mercedes SLK underneath, fewer will have heard of the Ssangyong Chairman. And fewer still will know about its link with the three pointed star.

Because while this might look like a bad copy of a Merc, this car shares the platform of the W124 E-class. Not only that, but it shares the 8v 2.3-litre four cylinder and the 2.8 and 3.2-litre six pots seen in that model. Effectively, what you see here is a W124 produced in South Korea.

Ssangyong and Mercedes had entered into a business arrangement in 1991 in which their technology was pooled for common benefit. Ssangyong wanted to develop a large SUV with Mercedes mechanicals, Mercedes wanted an SUV to sell in countries where saloons were less desirable. The result of this technology partnership was the Musso. The Musso was sold in many markets as the Mercedes-Benz Musso, a stop-gap between the failure of the Shogun joint venture and the launch of the ML-class in 1997. It used petrol and diesel engines drawn from the Mercedes family.

The Korean manufacturer wanted to make an executive saloon which could be used not only by government officials, but which could rival the Hyundai Grandeur in the private sector. Following the launch of the W210, Ssangyong's offer to purchase the underpinnings



**"Ssangyong's idea of an executive saloon owed much to Mercedes-Benz."**

of the outgoing W124 as a basis for its first foray into executive saloons was accepted by Mercedes, and the Korean company set about creating its masterpiece.

Unsurprisingly given the strength of the relationship, Ssangyong's idea of an executive saloon owed much to the design language of Mercedes-Benz. From a distance there are definite W140 S-class cues, while the facelift applied to later examples resembles a heavy handed copy of the W220 nose. It is in fact closer in size to these than to its base car, courtesy of a 100mm



Words: Sam Skelton



stretch to the wheelbase and an overall length increase of over a foot.

Launched in 1997, the Chairman hit a market already filled by the Hyundai XG30, the Kia Opirus, and the Daewoo Arcadia. Its use of well-tried Mercedes technology and styling cues led to popularity in its home market, but while the Chairman was available in other markets it sold poorly. In ome, badged as a Daewoo courtesy of shared brand ownership, it achieved even less success than it had with the Ssangyong badge.

Home market popularity was sufficient to ensure a long production run. Even as its replacement launched in 2008, Ssangyong found demand was too high to cease production, so renamed it the Chairman H to differentiate the car from the new Chairman W. Six years later, 2014 saw the end of the Chairman





## Modded Mercs



H line and the end of the W124 platform in series production.

Contemporary road test reports by British media suggest that the car had been substantially softened to cater for Korean tastes, but that were it to be refitted with Mercedes-specification suspension the Chairman would be an effective budget luxury saloon in the UK market. At the turn of the millennium plans existed to bring the car to the UK alongside the Rexton 4x4, but these ultimately never materialised. Road tests from countries where the Chairman was sold acknowledged the mechanical competence and the high specification of the car, but observed that for a car with roots in the Mercedes brand the

**"The Chairman could have been an effective budget luxury saloon in the UK market."**

quality was certainly not up to the standard expected. Interior plastics were singled out for criticism, likewise the gauge of steel used to make the seemingly light feeling panels. But the car wasn't expensive compared to imports like genuine Mercedes, and at its price point it was an acceptable model.

The Ssangyong Chairman may not have worn a Mercedes badge in the strictest sense, but then nor did many of the creations by Boschert, Koenig, or many other Mercedes converters. The fact that the Chairman was a mass production model shouldn't dissuade us – rather, we should see it as one of the most successful modified Mercedes ever produced.



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electrically adjustable steering  
column, leather steering wheel,  
original Sportline 15" alloys,  
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**Andrew Roberts** Contributor

**Benz On Film:**  
1963 Mercedes-Benz 220S

# On Her Majesty's Secret Service

The most human Bond film features a smattering of classic Benzes

**T**his never happened to the other fella'. For many years, the sixth entry in Eon's 007 films was either overlooked, derided or both, for the simple reason that it starred an Australian model turned actor as James Bond. But yet, it features direction from Peter Hunt, the saturnine Blofeld of Telly Savalas, and Diana Rigg as the Contessa Teresa "Tracy" di Vincenzo, a rare 1960s "Bond Girl" who does not fall prey to the lure of our hero's chest hair. Then there is the score from John Barry, which is probably his finest work since *The Knack*, a Mercedes-Benz 600 – and a believable and very human Bond from Lazenby, who gives a remarkably assured performance. There is even a cameo from Joanna Lumley.

In short, OHMSS is not just a picture that truly captures the world of the Ian Fleming novels it is one of the finest Bond films. The location work in Switzerland meant for some interesting drive-on roles from a W110 200 Universal and a very early example of the W115 220D "Lang"



"What of the 600? Well, we would hate to spoil the film for you."

while during the ice rink chase, the Aston Martin DBS Vantage of Bond and Tracy is pursued by a black W111 220S. The last-named automotive moment would have

**Above:** 220S is used to chase down Bond and his girl

come as no surprise to any devotee of spy films of this era, where a "Fintail" almost inevitably meant the arrival of enemy agents. Automotive enthusiasts will also note that the scene also starts the Escort Mk. I; the picture was splendid PR for Halewood and Dagenham.

And what of the 600? Well, we would hate to spoil the film for those of you who have not yet experienced OHMSS so all we will state here is the impact of the W100 in the final scene is genuinely devastating. Remember – we have all the time in the world...





*Mercedes*  
**R129 SL**

---





Once the symbol of everything cool,  
the R129 is now surprisingly affordable.  
Here's what you need to know.







# R129 Buying guide

Words: Sam Skelton

## HISTORY

Replacing the two-decade old R107 SL was never going to be an easy task. And Mercedes knew that to reinvent the wheel would be madness – the next SL had to be more of the same. That meant a nice sensible E-class underneath, E-class and S-class derived engines, and a tastefully restrained open body. Evolution was always the key at Mercedes; its last truly revolutionary GT being the 300SL Gullwing – and by translating Bruno Sacco's design language onto an SL, Mercedes created a car which was good enough to see Mercedes into a new millennium.

Unlike the previous model, this variant would include a new flagship – the 600SL was the first open Mercedes to feature a V12 engine in more than a generation. This joined the range in 1992, just a year before the range was rebranded.

The 1993 rebranding saw the model title placed ahead of the engine size – the 300SL was replaced by the SL280, and the 300SL-24 by the SL320, at the same time. These both used derivatives of the same M104 engine used in the 300SL-24, though with different displacements. These are likely to be the cheapest entries into SL ownership – but as no less special for it.

A facelift in late 1997 brought new bumpers and wheels – and new engines. The V8 was replaced with another unit of five litres, while the two straight sizes were replaced with identically sized V6s. The model designations continued unchanged as SL280, SL320 and SL500.

In 2002 the R129 series was replaced by the R230 series of SL. Once again sharing underpinnings with Mercedes saloons, the SL now featured a similar folding roof to the smaller SLK, and styling inspired by the contemporary S class model. Undeniably a Mercedes of the modern era, many feel that the

R230 is a far less special car than its predecessor, and strengthening R129 values support that.

With R129s produced in various forms from 1989 to 2002, models span from 16 to nearly thirty years old and with plenty of change in between, there should be an SL to appeal to every taste. And while these card-carrying classics should really be flashing the black Amex, you don't need a big bank balance to be able to run one. 213089 were made – to get yourself one of the best, this is what you need to know. You won't find much for below £5000 these days, and even then you're looking at tired 300s and 500s. Bank on spending £8-10000 for something worth having and £20000 for the very best from a dealer. Most desirable are the 500SL V8s, and the 24v six cylinder models. The V12 has a niche interest, but running costs have dissuaded the majority. If you want a well-kept bargain a 600 might be a safe bet at £15000.

**"Evolution was always the key at Mercedes; its last truly revolutionary GT being the 300SL Gullwing."**

## BODYWORK

Mercedes, sadly, has acquired a reputation for making cars which rust. And it's true – especially on the sills, the leading edge of the front wings, and underneath the plastic "Sacco panels" on the sides.


Having said that, the R129 is one

of the best 1990s Mercs as far as corrosion protection is concerned, and you'll certainly see far fewer issues than on contemporary saloon models. A lot of this is down to many owners storing them off the road over winter, but even on the worst examples you're only likely to find corrosion where road salt can hide unnoticed.

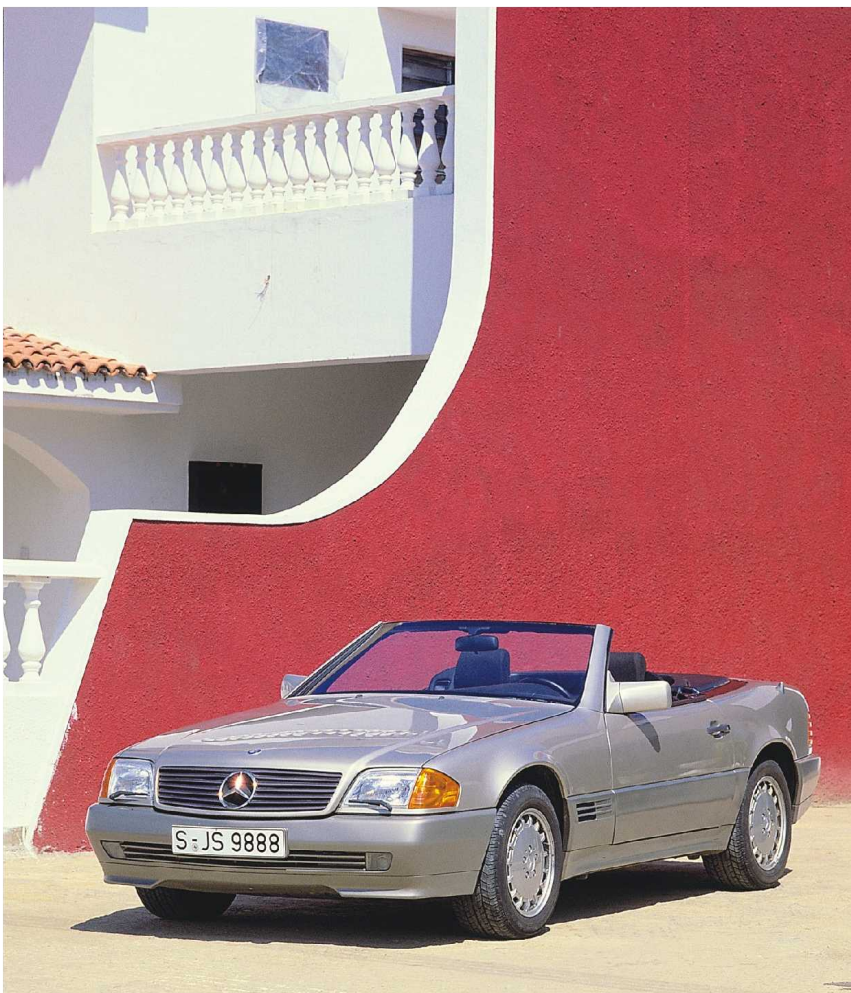
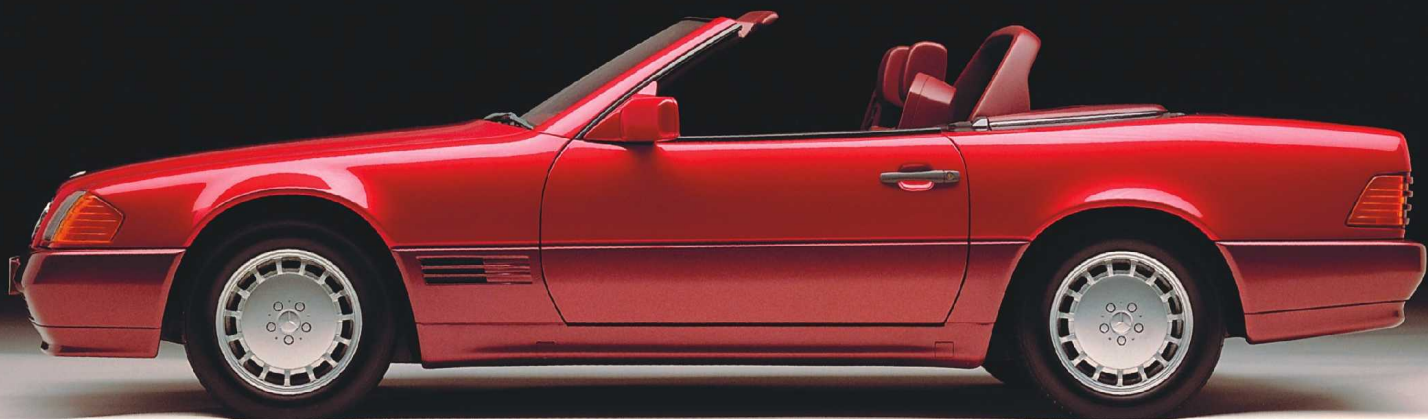
It's worth checking the hard top with the same level of care as the rest of the shell – they're prone to damage where handled and from storage, especially those with panoramic glass tops. We'd advise you to walk away from any car that no longer has its hardtop – they were supplied as standard equipment with all cars from new.

If you need panels, Mercedes can still oblige... at a price. While pattern parts are available, the fit is nowhere near as good and we wouldn't recommend it.

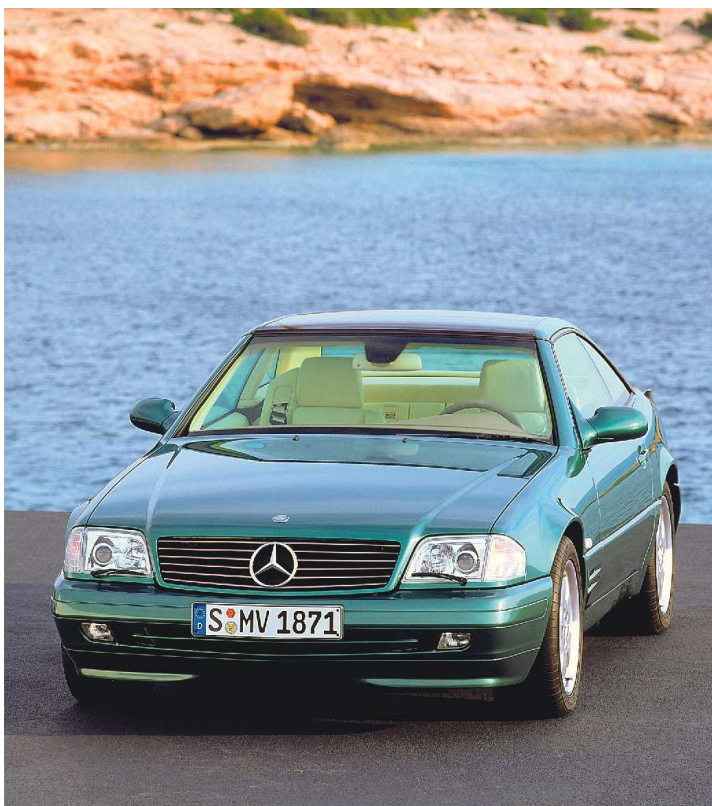
## ENGINE

The R129 SL used a number of different engine families during its lifespan. Straight sixes, V6s, V8s and V12s featured, shared with other models in the range. Starting from the bottom, the 12v M103 six cylinder was fitted to the 300SL. Derivatives of this engine made it into everything from the 190E to the W126 S-class model, though the 3.0 seen in the SL shared most of its ancillaries with the W124 300E. Similarly, the 300E-24 donated its M104 straight six to the 300SL-24. E280 and E320 models gave their 24v sixes to the first SL280s and SL320s, though later models were powered by the M112 V6 engines from the W210 E-class range. 500SLs were powered by the M119 V8 (later models used the later M113), while the V12 shared its M120 engine with the S-class range. All engines were fuel injected – and the injection systems rarely pose issues. One thing that does affect SLs of this era is Mercedes' 











# £ *R129 Buying guide*

infamous 1990s biodegradable wiring issue. The plastic sheathing for the wires was designed to biodegrade, improving recyclability. However, it didn't account for the cars still on the road almost 3 decades on, and as it breaks it can cause shorting and other electrical maladies under the bonnet. Replacement looms are available, but they are far from cheap.

Later cars with the M112 and M113 engines use two plugs per cylinder, making for increased running costs. The extra complexity robbed the R129 of some of its reliability too – unless they're cheap, we'd look to stick to the earlier engines.

## TRANSMISSION

All models used gearboxes developed and built by Mercedes itself, with a choice of four and five speed automatics and five speed manuals depending upon the age and engine of the car in question.

The majority of cars you'll find are automatic, using a 4G-Tronic

**"Later cars with the M112 and M113 engines use two plugs per cylinder, making for increased running costs."**

derivative of the 722.3 gearbox, or a 5G-Tronic derivative of the 722.6 after 1995. Both gearboxes are tried and tested in scores of Mercedes saloon models, and neither parts nor experience will be difficult to come by if they're needed. The five speed manual is a rarity fitted only to some six cylinder examples – while it's a Mercedes gearbox shared with the

W124, we really would recommend you focus your attention on the automatics as they suit the character of the car far better. Check the fluid – if it smells burned, or if it's any colour other than cherry red, bank on gearbox issues. There are plenty out there with good gearboxes, so we'd walk away at this point.

Differentials are typically solid, though can exhibit signs of wear at particularly high mileages. Repeatedly engage reverse and drive, and assess the severity of the take-up. If there's clonking, it'll need rebuilding or replacing. This is relatively simple – certainly for a transmission specialist there's nothing painful here. Expect to be able to haggle if the diff is shot – though with as much choice as there is, we'd suggest you look for a better example.

## SUSPENSION

The adaptive damping fitted as standard to the V12 models and optional on all others can throw up a number of faults – not only should

Tech spec	300SL	300SL-24	SL280	SL320	SL500	SL600
Engine	2962cc	2962cc	2799cc	3199cc	4973cc	5987cc
Max power	188 bhp	231 bhp	190 bhp	228 bhp	322 bhp	389 bhp
Max torque	192 lbf.ft	201 lbf.ft	199 lbf.ft	232 lbf.ft	332 lbf.ft	420 lbf.ft
0-60 mph	9.0 secs	8.6 secs	10.2 secs	8.4 secs	6.3 secs	5.1 secs
Max Speed	142 mph	137 mph	143 mph	149 mph	155 mph	155 mph
Length mm	4470	4470	4470	4470	4470	4499
Width mm	1811	1811	1811	1811	1811	1811
Weight kg	1650	1692	1830	1780	1889	2050



# £ *R129 Buying guide*

the dash be free of error codes but the ride should be like a magic carpet if it's fitted. If there are any issues, it's not really economic to repair properly and we would ideally focus on cars which didn't have it.

The steering is by recirculating ball – and while it's a reliable setup, it can and does get sloppy with age. Make sure the box isn't overtightened to compensate – there should be a small amount of play in the system and it shouldn't feel resistant. Equally, while a system showing slop is better than an overtightened box, you would be better off finding one with a good, well-adjusted steering box.

## BRAKES

R129s use discs on the front and rear – vented on the front. The system is reliable in service – discs aren't prone to warping, and handbrakes rarely pose a problem if maintained regularly. Discs and pads are available, and cost small change – we found pads for under £20, and front discs for £60 each

## INTERIOR

The biggest electrical problem you will find with an R129 – from 1992 until about 1996 – is the wiring loom. Mercedes used biodegradable plastics to sheath the loom to aid in recyclability, but didn't account for cars lasting beyond a projected lifespan of a decade. These were expensive cars, and came with expensive toys. You should check the operation of the electric hood. This can suffer on cars stored outside over winter and so the electrics should be checked for corrosion – as well as ensuring the windows and air con work. These rarely fail and parts can be sourced, but should always be used as negotiating tools when looking to buy a car with issues. More likely to fail are the various LCD readouts – if they don't work, sourcing good replacements might



**"Anything you buy should have leather, air con and an automatic gearbox."**

not be as easy as you think.

More worrying can be trim issues – and most of these centre around the various storage cubbies in the SL cabin. These often suffer from jammed or seized mechanisms – the ones in the dash and in the doors being particularly prone unless the car has been cared for. Only the very best tend to survive unscathed. Sometimes the clips can snap off completely – rendering them permanently open or permanently closed depending upon when the mechanism was broken.

Make sure the spanner is present for raising the hood in case the electrics fail. You'll not be happy if you get caught short!

## Verdict

Once upon a time the R129 was one of the most conspicuous success symbols on the planet, and they still have an air of elegance which allows them to fit in at all the very best places. Yet early ones are simple enough to maintain at home, and all are within the reach of many enthusiasts in terms of price. Look at the direction SL prices in general are heading and you'll see how mad it would be to let them pass by while they're quite this cheap. While a bad one could still cost the earth to sort out, they're common enough that finding a good example of the model you want shouldn't be unduly difficult.

We'd look to put our money into a nice early 300SL, the simplest model, with sensible running costs and servicing bills. That said, we would more than understand those who choose the thumping V8 of a 500SL in preference to a six pot, as the 12v 300SLs aren't imbued with a great deal of performance. Unless you have deep pockets, avoid the 600SL – yes, there are some bargains but the running costs of such a machine can be ruinous. Skimping only causes problems – and previous owners may well have done just that. Anything you buy should have leather, air con and an automatic gearbox, as the market still prizes cars so equipped and penalizes the manuals with cloth trim. Condition should come before everything else though – if you can afford a mint SL280 or an average 500SL, making do without the extra cylinders is what we'd advise.





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# 1995 Mercedes-Benz E220 Coupe

Yes, it's pricey – but it's genuinely as new

**W**e'd not have chosen white new, but the previous owner was clearly a fan – and it's proof positive of the car's condition that even in white it looks as fresh as the day it was new. The black leather interior is a perfect contrast too, and the 8 hole diamond cut wheels sit well on it. Options when new included a front armrest and Sportline suspension, but not air conditioning. The first owner had fancied a used SL, but chose instead to trade in her 190E 1.8 on a new E220 Coupe.

Bodily we've never seen a better example. Not only is there no rust, there isn't even any dirt around the number plate lights or in the corners



of the sills. This car has only ever been out in the wet four times according to the dealer, and we're more than happy to believe that. It goes without saying that all the seals and the chromework are perfect, though we should note that the nearside wheels both needed refurbishing when we visited. Kim assures us that both will be done before sale.

Get in and it feels and smells like a new car. Judging by its age and the chrome star on the steering wheel it was subject to the airbag recall which many were not, and the chrome lifts what is otherwise a very dark interior. Even the boot smells like new. It goes without saying that all the windows work with no signs of issues from



# £ One to buy

Mileage: 17,228 miles  
Price: £18,995



the regulators, and that likewise the sunroof works perfectly. If you thought that last month's 380SL felt new, think again. This is the real deal.

**"It's a one owner from new car, and that's borne out by the history file – it's got everything."**



To drive, it's like new. No wind noise, no real tyre noise, the seats are supportive, and it feels like new. The engine pulls well with no hint of coarseness, and the gearbox changes perfectly. It almost feels like a shame to drive it, because when you open the bonnet you see that it's just as good under there. This isn't the cleanliness of steaming, this is something different. This is a car that has never seen any real use. It doesn't even look like it's done the 17000 miles it has.

It's a one owner from new car, and that's borne out by the history file – it's got everything from new. Not only that, but both keys look unused, and have keyrings from the supplying dealer. This really is a once-in-a-lifetime buy, and we'd love to see it presented in the same sterling condition in another 23 years.

## Conclusion

We like the E220 Coupe so much here at Mercedes Driver that we bought one with our money money. And while it's far from a bad car, driving this one makes our feel desperately tired in every way. We've not driven a mid-90s car that feels as tight or as together as this Coupe, and on top of that it all works as expected. Yes, it's ludicrously expensive for a 23 year old Mercedes. But £18995 isn't mad for the 12 month old car that it feels like it is. This deserves to be bought and cherished, and at this price that's the kind of buyer it'll attract

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MARKET NEWS

# Market Analysis

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











## Auction guide

**T**he month of August has evolved over the years in classic car auction circles, culminating in as many as five auctions per year in recent seasons.

However, in 2018, all eyes were on Anglia Car Auctions at Kings Lynn and Bonhams at Beaulieu for the UK action.

Bonhams only offered one Mercedes-Benz for sale – a very tired project 190SL roadster – which failed to achieve its estimate of £30,000–40,000 and as yet remains unsold. Given that prices for restored 190SLs have been on the slide for a while, it is inevitable that project prices would begin to reflect this over time.

This left the remainder of activity at Anglia, and the good news was that 18 Mercedes-Benzes were on sale with a date spread of 1959 to 2003.

To date, 13 of these sold on August 25 however some are said to be subject to provisional offers and further bids are invited – demonstrating the lifecycle of the modern auction is at least two weeks beyond the sale date itself.

ACA's sale rate of 78% on the day was above-average for this year and demonstrated how convertibles continue to drive further interest in the Mercedes marque. Of the 13 sold, nine were convertibles and of these, three were supercharged R170 SLK models.

We are starting to see more volume now of R170 examples and they do represent excellent value. Their average sale price of £2,121 (including premium and VAT) and this sale demonstrates just how affordable it can be to not only access Mercedes-Benz ownership but the convenience and style of an automatically folding metal roof – the first of its type in a production car. It is for this reason that many are now hoovering up good R170s when they appear as they represent a landmark in modern classic technology.

From the chrome bumper stable, a very attractive W123 230CE finished in Astral Silver achieved £3,498,



**Above:** 280SE Coupe reached £20000





**Words:** Justin Lazic



**Above:** Just under £9000 made this 190C Fintail good value



which at first does appear to be below market rates for an example in such good order, until its 185,000 mileage is considered.

Nevertheless, with W123 coupe prices peaking out at around £18,000 at auction in late 2016, this represented a shrewd purchase despite the mileage. With parts still available and backed by a cult following across the country, the pillarless W123 coupe range offers everything that is needed for prestige classic motoring without the bankbreaking expense of the larger V8 models.

**"The column shift manual, four cylinder example looked and sounded the part."**

Also from the tried-and-true range was a 1965 W110 190C Fintail – which under new rules will now fall under the road tax-linked MoT exemption category.

The column shift manual, four cylinder example looked and sounded the part, running true and demonstrating the benefits of an above-average restoration, including the interior.

Whilst it is always desirable to see original MB-Tex upholstery in Fintails, for those who have not fared as well as others, a good standard of re-trim can sometimes make the difference and the £8,957 paid was above-average for a four cylinder Fintail – a pleasing sign that the market is starting to appreciate the four door models of this era.

The highest grossing example up at Kings Lynn was a 1968 W111 280SE Coupe, which at £20,000 was





## Auction guide





above-average for unregistered left hand drive W111 coupes in recent years with six cylinder engines.

This example is said to have been supplied new to the USA prior to being extradited to Japan, and then imported to the UK. Running and driving, it will also benefit from the recent MoT exemption rules and all things being equal may never require an MoT in its lifetime – other than to initially register it in the first place.

**"W203 C32 AMG estates are a very rare find and the Anglia example, which sold for £4,982, was a very intriguing prospect."**

Like the 190C, it had been resprayed and retrimmed so the proof will be in the pudding as the car is no doubt prepared for the 2019 show season with the Mercedes-Benz Owners Club.

In the exotic modern classes, W203 C32 AMG estates are a very rare find and the Anglia example, which sold for £4,982, was a very intriguing prospect.

Presenting very well and showing just under 57,000 kilometres, this Japanese import predictably showed very little sign if any of the corrosion which traditionally affects UK delivered W203 models, especially estate cars.

Imported by and registered to its UK vendor in 2016, this C32 represents a point in time where Mercedes' AMG line began to compete in every category against the BMW M and Audi S products, culminating in



models across just about every vehicle segment today.

Rating at 350bhp and 0-60 in 5.1 seconds, the C32 remains among the fastest C-Classes ever and is a genuine alternative to a BMW M3 which, in its time-equivalent E46 guise, was never released in estate form. On this basis

**Above:** £3498 made this 230CE a canny buy

and given the odometer reading, at under £5k this looks to have been the buy of the month.

There can be no faster way to get the kids to school than in one of these – which is why every working father should buy one – if you can find another.

## Sold Mercs at auction

Date	House	Car	Result including premium and VAT	Venue
25-Aug-18	ACA	1991 W201 190E 1.8	£2,100	King's Lynn, Anglia
25-Aug-18	ACA	1999 R170 SLK230 Kompressor	£1,700	King's Lynn, Anglia
25-Aug-18	ACA	2000 R170 SLK230 Kompressor	£2,438	King's Lynn, Anglia
25-Aug-18	ACA	2002 R170 SLK230 Kompressor	£2,226	King's Lynn, Anglia
25-Aug-18	ACA	1971 R107 350SL	Sold as a pair with:	King's Lynn, Anglia
25-Aug-18	ACA	1979 R179 350SL	£5,406	King's Lynn, Anglia
25-Aug-18	ACA	2000 R129 SL320	£7,526	King's Lynn, Anglia
25-Aug-18	ACA	1974 R107 350SL	£7,526	King's Lynn, Anglia
25-Aug-18	ACA	1993 R129 300SL	£2,862	King's Lynn, Anglia
25-Aug-18	ACA	2003 R230 SL350	£7,632	King's Lynn, Anglia
25-Aug-18	ACA	1965 W110 190C Fintail	£8,957	King's Lynn, Anglia
25-Aug-18	ACA	1968 W111 280SE Coupe	£20,000	King's Lynn, Anglia
25-Aug-18	ACA	1985 W123 230CE	£3,498	King's Lynn, Anglia
25-Aug-18	ACA	2002 W203 C32 AMG Estate	£4,982	King's Lynn, Anglia





# 2002 Mercedes-Benz CL500

A good example of an underrated neo-classic

**F**inished in Blue Quartz, this looks every inch the luxury liner it was when it was new. While pale blue with grey could never be accused of being an imaginative colour combination, there is a reason – and that is that it works incredibly well on the car. Options include heated screen washers and a wood and leather steering wheel – cosmetic and functional niceties which make this an appealing example.

The paint and trim are excellent. There's none of the rust which plaques most Mercedes of this era, and we could see no signs of kerbing on any of the alloys when we tested the car. While it's not perfect, with a few stone chips to the nose, it's certainly no worse than you would



expect of a 16 year old 89000 mile car, and it's far better than most.

Inside, this continues – there's a little bit of discolouration to the drivers seat, but this is normal for a car of this age. Every button we pressed – and we counted over 100 of them in there – works exactly as it did when it left the factory, with all the electrical gizmos in fully functioning order. The wood is in good condition, including that on the steering wheel, and the back seat looks like it's barely been used. The voluminous boot is in the same condition.

Under the bonnet looks good – and the mechanical care has been extended to the tyres; a matching set of Falkens with plenty of tread. To drive, it's as good as it looks. It pulls nicely, the gear changes are perfect, the brakes are



# £ One to buy

Mileage: 89,239 miles  
Price: £7,995



very sharp and pull up straight without locking. The steering is engaging for such a large Mercedes, and it can be driven with vigour should the opportunity allow. The entertainment and air conditioning systems work perfectly, as does the heater.

**"Every button we pressed – and we counted over 100 of them in there – works exactly as it did when it left the factory."**

There's not much in the file apart from the handbooks – and the one for the COMAND system is particularly thick. The service book is stamped to 2013, but beyond there the trail goes dry. But with some cars the condition does the talking, and this is one of those cars. While the lack of history might put some people off a car like this, it looks and feels like a good honest example and having spent some time with it we'd be happy to take it at face value.

## Conclusion

It's a nice example of an underappreciated yet appreciating classic. We're not sure about the AMG badge on the bootlid, but the muted colour scheme and overall condition make this a car well worth a look. We borrowed this car for a couple of days, and not only did it deal with everything in a quiet and unruffled way but it returned mid 20s to the gallon from a 5.0 V8. £7995 might be a healthy price for a CL500, but it's a very good example – and one day we'll wish we'd bought them all when they were this price.

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# PARKING BRAKE *FIX!*

**Peter Simpson** explains the right way of sorting an ineffective Mercedes-Benz parking brake on all-disc models.

**T**he handbrake – or more accurately in a Mercedes-Benz context, parking brake – has to be one of the most misunderstood parts of a classic car from a maintenance viewpoint. It's one of those things which frequently needs 'fettling' at MoT (or, on cars over 40 years old, voluntary safety check time) because it doesn't quite meet the test standard.

Often though, the 'fix' carried out by a DIY mechanic will mask the problem rather than cure it...

A parking brake has two main functions. The chief one, as the name implies, is to prevent a stationary or 'parked' car from rolling away. However it's also there to act as an emergency or 'backup' braking system to slow or stop a car if the main braking system fails. This, obviously, is

much more likely to be needed on an older car with single-circuit brakes where a single leak can lead to total fluid loss and total brake failure. Consequently, on cars with single-circuit brakes a much higher parking brake efficiency is required – 25% as against 16% on a car with dual-circuit brakes where it's highly unlikely the parking brake will ever need to slow or stop a moving vehicle.





## Parking brake guide

Words and Pics: Peter Simpson

Other than that, the key requirements are that the handbrake cable is in good condition, not frayed, and that all pivot points, clevis pins and so on are in good condition, not seized and without excessive wear. The lever or pedal must also operate cleanly, lock on, and still have 'reserve travel' when the brake is fully applied – in other words it can't be at the very end of its available movement. It's also important that when the handbrake is fully 'off' its operating mechanism is totally off-tension.

And that last point is the one that's often not understood, because often, the response to a test failure or clearly less-than-perfect parking brake is to go underneath with a couple of spanners, take the handbrake cable adjuster up a few notches and, because the brake now holds or reaches the required efficiency, assume all's well. In most cases though, all this achieves is to put the cable under tension, so that it is holding the parking brake pads/shoes closer to the disc or drum. This, though, means that the cable is always under tension, something it is not designed to be, and before too long it will probably break.

Nine times out of ten, an inefficient parking brake is caused by problems within the hubs – excessive clearance between friction surfaces or something that's worn, seized or broken. On cars with disc rear brakes the usual 'classic' setup is for the parking brake to be a completely separate system comprising two small brake shoes which operate on the inside of the disc, and to access them you have to remove the disc. This system is generally very reliable unless neglected or abused, mainly because, as the parking brake should never be used on a moving vehicle, wear should be virtually

**"It's one of those things which frequently needs 'fettling' at MoT because it doesn't quite meet the test standard."**

non-existent. This does, however, mean that the adjusters rarely have to do anything, so when the time comes that they do need to, er 'adjust' the brake, it's not unknown for them to have seized! Unusually, cars with careful owners can be slightly more susceptible to this, because careful owners don't use the parking brake while on the move, and because they usually renew brake pads in good time, don't have so much reason to remove/renew rear brake discs.

Having said that, though, while sorting out an iffy parking brake properly may be a little more involved than you'd ideally like, once it's done it's done, and you're extremely unlikely to need to look at it again. In this context it's also worth mentioning that the parking brake cable adjustment is there only to aid installation and to take up stretch within the cable itself. The latter is actually quite unusual, and nine times out of ten, once a parking brake cable has been installed, the cable won't need adjusting for a very long time, if ever...

Anyway, the short picture-sequence shows the key stages that are usually involved in sorting a less than perfect Mercedes-Benz parking brake though as always with general guides, you should also refer to a good workshop manual to show the specifics of your car. As you can see, a lot of

the photos are concerned with the rear service (or foot) brake. That's because much of this has to be dismantled anyway, and it therefore makes sense to take a cursory look at the parking brake if, as here, the rear discs are being changed. It's also wise to check the pads and discs as part of a parking brake sortout – in fact it's probably quite hard not to do this.

The full brake adjustment set-up procedure is as follows. With the car raised and firmly supported at the back (axle stands, NEVER a jack alone, you probably 'knew' that, but the reminder does no harm as people who 'knew' still do it and are still sometimes killed or badly injured as a result) and both rear wheels off, check that the cable/linkage is fully 'loose' with the brake off.

Then set each wheel, in turn, so that one of the wheelnut holes is 45degrees off-vertical and to the rear of the car – in this position it will be aligned with the parking brake shoe adjuster. Then, using a screwdriver as shown in the photo, flick the adjuster upwards until the hub locks. Then knock it down by five or six teeth until the hub is free.

With this setting correct, you may well find that – assuming no-one's been messing around – that the brake pedal/lever action is back within limits anyway. The parking brake should be 100% free with the brake released but fully applied at seven or eight 'clicks'. If not, adjust the cable until this is reached.

Despite its relatively unconventional nature, the 'foot on, hand release' mechanism at the dashboard on most Mercedes doesn't generally give that much trouble – the most common 'problem' is that a mat or similar has become wedged under the pedal.







## Parking brake guide

# STEP *BY* STEP

**T**hough most pre-1978 cars are now MoT exempt, a voluntary test is still strongly recommended for those without the skill and experience to safety-check a car thoroughly. The test also provides an accurate and measured brake efficiency test and some may consider that alone to be worth the test fee. Most Mercedes have dual-circuit brakes and a minimum handbrake efficiency standard of 16%, but on cars with single-circuit brakes 25% efficiency is required as the parking brake may need to stop the car if the main system fails.

**1** As the parking brake mechanism is hidden behind the brake disc and removing the disc also involves removing the calliper, it makes sense to combine sorting the parking brake with a rear brake service. The first job is to push the brake pad securing pin out like this...

**2** Next remove the pads; this also involves pushing them back within the calliper – remove the master cylinder cap first, so that displaced fluid can flow back. This method works for most cars, but a few vehicles with specialist/high-tech braking systems require a slightly different approach – refer to your workshop manual.

**3** Now undo the calliper securing bolts (15, 17 or 19mm depending on application) so the calliper can be swung out of



the way. I also strongly recommend 'hanging' the removed calliper from something underneath, so there's no tension on the brake hose.

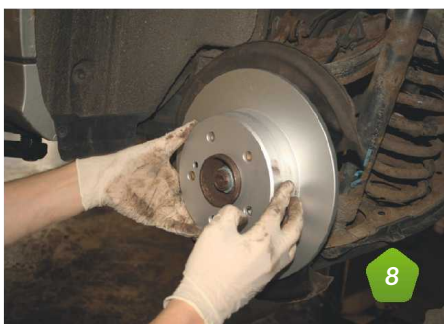
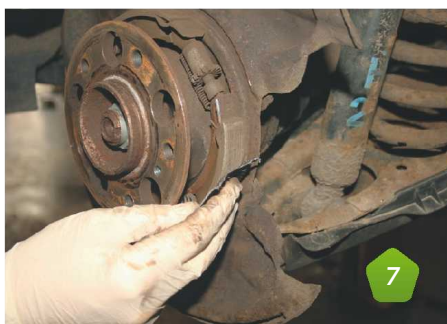
**4** Now we can take the disc off – depending on your car's age this will need either an Allen key or a Torx fixing. The screw should come out easily but the disc itself may be tight or rusted on in which case a few taps on the side of the 'top hat' section



should free it.

**5** The handbrake mechanism will then be revealed in all its glory! As you can see, it comprises two shoes of a size classic motorcycle fans may recognise, an operating pin and an adjuster which is designed to work automatically when the brake is applied, though if the parking brake is used correctly – ie not when the car is moving – wear should be minimal.





**6** Adjusting the parking brake. This is done with the disc back in place, but I'm showing it now so you can see exactly what is involved. First, make sure the adjuster isn't seized and free it off if it is – this needs to be done with the adjuster – or parts being 'lubricated' – off the car as oils and friction materials don't go well together! See main text for full adjustment procedure.

**7** It's also a good idea to 'roughen' the surface of the brake shoes using emery or similar to improve grip. You may want to wear a throwaway face mask while doing this 'just in case' though it's worth bearing in mind that no brake pads or shoes containing asbestos have been made since the early 1980s.

**8** In our case, the handbrake check was carried out as part of a disc and pad change, so

a new disc went on. Do ensure the mating surface that the disc sits on is clean, as otherwise the disc will sit slightly crooked and wear unevenly, resulting in brake judder due to 'disc thickness variation' – orDTV.

**9** In our case the brake pad pins had only a little surface corrosion, so as the 'facilities' were to hand we were able to clean them up. This is actually quite important for brake efficiency, as the operation depends on the pads being free to move – new pins aren't expensive so change them if in any doubt.

**10** For the same reason it's a good idea to apply a little copper grease (never use conventional grease on or near brake components) to the edge of the brake pads so they don't seize within the calliper. A smidgen on the back is also a good idea to dampen vibration – which is what causes most types of brake squeal.

**11** The pads back in place. If you didn't have to push the pistons back much to get the old pads out, you will need to now, as new pads are thicker than worn-out ones. Watch for fluid loss at the master cylinder – it's not unknown for 'over enthusiastic' servicing to include topping-up fluid when the level has dropped slightly due to pad wear.

**12** Finally, while copper grease should not be used between the disc and mating surface due to the disc needing to sit 100% square, it's a very good idea to put some on the centre of the disc, where the road wheel and disc mate, to prevent the wheel rusting on which could be a bit awkward in a roadside emergency. This is especially important with alloy wheels.





## Technical Tips

### Wedge it!

As we've now entering the time of year when many people take their 'summer use only' cars off the road for winter, here's an optional 'laying up' tip. As I've mentioned before in Mercedes Driver, it's fairly common for a clutch plate to rust on to the flywheel if the two are left in contact for a time, especially if the car is stored in a slightly damp garage. When this happens, the car will not go into gear when the engine is running. There is a cure for this which usually works and involves starting the car in gear and driving it with the clutch down until the clutch frees, but that's a bit brutal. It's also not always practical if, for example, the car has to go front-in to a garage or there's no room to drive a car with no clutch.

In these cases – or if the drive with no clutch method seems a tad brutal, then the easiest thing to do is wedge the pedal down like this. There is a slight downside in that it's not unknown for a master or slave cylinder that's left long-term in the active position will leak and lose fluid, but that is relatively rare – certainly much more so than a rusted-up clutch.



**Above:** Wedging a clutch pedal down when a car is stored will prevent the plate from becoming rusted on to the flywheel.



### Wrong Number

**T**he next tip this month is, I will freely admit, something of a personal hobby-horse of mine. It concerns number plates and, specifically, when old-style white or silver on black plates gave way to reflective white front/yellow rear plates. Many classic car enthusiasts consider a new set of old-style plates to be a good finishing touch to a restoration project, and the law has recently changed – now all vehicles that are registered as Historic Vehicles – ie over 40 years old – can use old-style plates. This change was made mainly to make 'enforcement' easier – in practice the old 1973/74 cutoffs were widely flouted because many 'enforcement agency' staff were unaware of the cutoff dates, and those that did know often had more important matters to attend to. Now, though, the position is very clear – if it qualifies for free Historic Vehicle tax it also qualifies for old-style numberplates, but if not, it doesn't. This also means of course that every year a few more cars become eligible.

However, there is an important point in all this, and it's something which those who weren't around or weren't noticing cars in the sixties probably won't appreciate. Though reflective plates became compulsory from January 1973 on cars (but not,

incidentally, on buses or larger lorries), they were actually available as an option from December 20 1967, and in practice the overwhelming majority of new-car buyers from then on chose the modern style of plate. After all, the number plate is/was what identified the car as new, and it wouldn't exactly make a lot of sense to do something to that deliberately which would make it look slightly old! A few cars were sold with old-style plates into the 1970s, but these were very much the exception.

What's more, there was no 'minimum' age on new-style plates, and many people with older cars bought new-style plates as a way of making the car look new to those who didn't understand the year letter thing.

So while I won't disagree that an old-style plate can look 'period' on many 1967-73 cars, do bear in mind that using same probably isn't historically accurate. However not all 'reflective' plates are the same either, as when Great Britain's registration system changed completely in 2001, the character typeface changed too, and these days you'll probably only get the contemporary style from high street outlets. For some time it was impossible to buy the pre-2001 style, but they are now available again from online suppliers and from sales stands at the bigger classic car shows.



Words: Peter Simpson

## Wait before you check

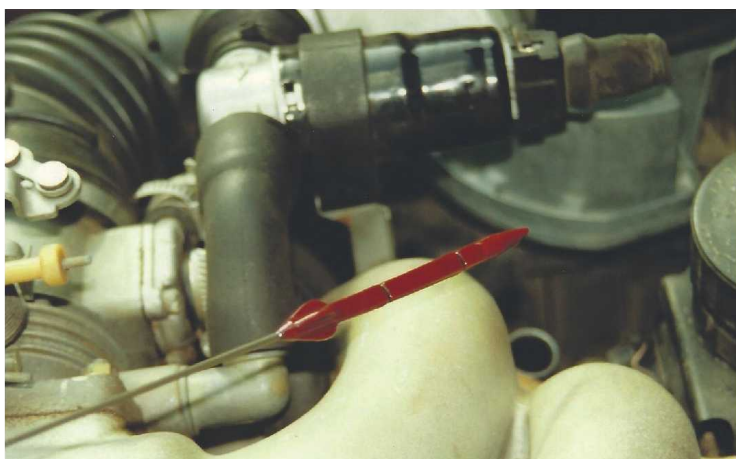
Once upon a time, when everyone seemed to have more time and petrol stations employed staff to operate the pumps, it was quite common for said pump attendant to offer to 'check your oil' as part of the service. Back then, cars generally used more oil than they do now and regular oil top-ups were part and parcel of life. The aim, of course, was to sell the motorist some oil which would be supplied by whatever petrol brand was being sold.

However, although we now think of this as a 'nice' thing to do and part of a bygone age when it was always summer and never a schoolday, it did sometimes cause a few problems. Specifically, because a car on a forecourt had been driven on to a forecourt, much of the oil in the engine would be in the engine rather than the engine's sump, leading to a false low reading when the oil was dipped and subsequent overfilling.

This started becoming a significant issue when the first BMC FWD cars (Minis, 1100/1300 etc.) appeared as the engine is above the gearbox/oil sump and it takes two or three minutes after a run for the oil to drain back.

Precisely the same thing applies to many Mercedes-Benz cars, especially those with larger and more complex engines. Don't dip these immediately after a long run, and definitely don't just pull the stick out and read it. The correct procedure is to wait two or three minutes after a run, pull the stick out and wipe it but don't take any notice of what it reads. Then put it back in the engine, pull it back out, and THIS is the correct reading.

Old hands will no doubt think of this as normal practice that they've known for years, but it's a common mistake made by newcomers to looking after their own vehicle, especially those who are partly 'self taught'.



**Above:** Oil should always be dipped after an engine has been switched off for a couple of minutes, to allow oil to drain back down into the sump. Otherwise a 'false low' reading may be recorded.



## Brake fluid Blocker

When working on specific parts of a hydraulic brake circuit, you often need to 'clamp off' the part of the system that you're working on, to prevent/minimise fluid loss and make bleeding the system back up afterwards easier. Often, it's convenient to block the fluid by clamping a brake hose. This is a normal and fully-accepted repair procedure, and purpose-made brake hose clamps are readily available and, these days not that expensive in the overall scheme of things.

However Sod's law states that whenever you actually need a little-used tool like this you won't have it. Then, it's very tempting to use a set of 'Mole' type grips as shown in photo 1 – which, I will mention now, is a set-up shot on a scrap car! That's because using grips like this runs a very real risk of weakening or damaging the hose; the grip's teeth can bite into it, weakening the rubber.

There is, though, a way in which you can use grips if the proper tools aren't available, and as you can see from the second photo, chances are the extra bits you need are in your toolbox already. The round sockets edges will stop the hose from being cut.

I've used this method myself on several occasions and it does work. It is, though, a bit fiddly and really something to think of as a one off Sunday afternoon 'get out of trouble' tip rather than regular practice.

**Above:** This approach, however, is a handy alternative if a proper brake hose clamp isn't available. Don't, though, clamp the hose too tightly – just enough to stop fluid from flowing past.



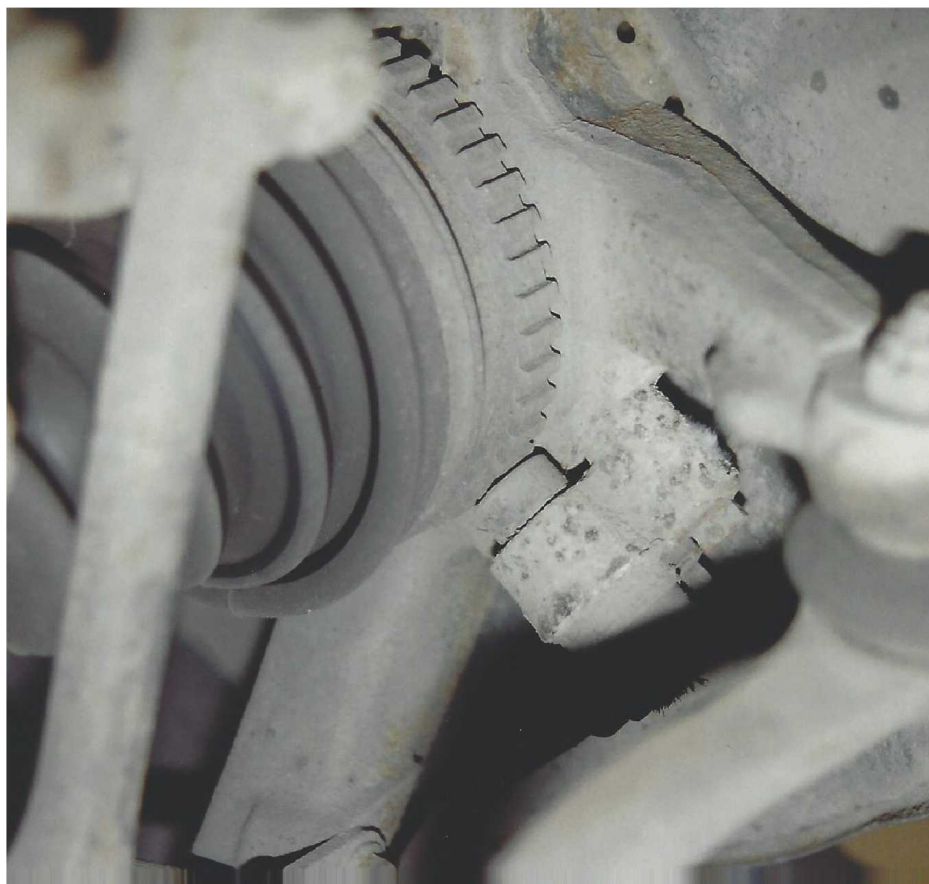
## Technical Tips

### ABS Aggro

**A**BS problems are among the most common and irritating faults that can afflict modern-ish cars that are getting on a bit. Sometimes the light will stay on occasionally, sometimes it's on half the time but off the other half, and sometimes it's on all the time. An illuminated ABS light is an MoT failure – and you can't 'cure' it by simply taking the bulb out!

Though ABS modules sometimes fail, in most cases the fault will be a failing or failed sensor. I have known of cases – rare cases admittedly – where the failure has been caused by nothing more than a piece of dirt on a sensor, but in most cases the fault is with a sensor rather than ABS control unit. Alternatively, what seems like an ABS sensor fault – and what shows up on a Fault Code Reader as an ABS sensor fault might well actually be a fault with the wiring or a plug-in connection.

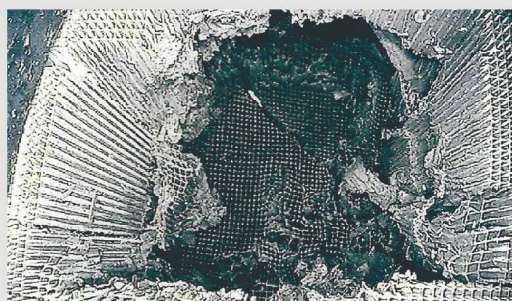
Finally, ABS sensors sometimes fail as a result of being crushed due to corrosion within the 'hole' that they are fitted into. Though Mercedes-Benz cars are rather less susceptible to this than some makes – it's very common on Fords and Rovers for example – our cars certainly aren't immune.



**Above:** Most ABS failures are caused by a faulty sensor or sensor wiring.

### Killing the Cat

Last month, I mentioned in passing that 'bump starting' a car with a catalytic converter was a bad idea as it can cause damage to a catalytic converter. I've since found a photo which illustrates this far better than any words can. This is the inside of a cat and while it's not 100% certain that the problem was caused by bump-starting, it's known that the car in question had a weak battery, the owner lived at a top of a moderate hill, and he did admit to having done it 'once or twice'. The car in question was also a nil-maintenance run till it drops tradesman's hack...





## When was it made?

**I**t can sometimes be helpful to know exactly when a car was made. Of course, if you've still got your car's original build sheet in the service book you'll be able to trace it pretty easily, and the chassis number can be compared to factory records, but what about if you need to know NOW, because you're ordering parts and the car in question is registered just after a crucial changeover, but close enough to have possibly been made before.

You can often get a good idea by looking at individual components, as these were often 'date stamped' by their manufacturer, using an easily-cracked code. Just in time parts delivery has now been the norm for many years at Mercedes Benz, and it's unlikely that a part will have been made months before being fitted – it's unlikely to be more than five or six weeks.

One easily-accessed part that is often date-stamped is the ashtray underside. You also often find date-stamps on things like wheelarch liners, rear view mirror surrounds and seat cushions. Looking at a few of these will often tell you a great deal. The police also often use clues like this to help date a car which they suspect is not what it's being claimed to be...



**Above:** Date code on a wheelarch liner. See where the last 'dot' is, it indicates manufacture in the ninth month (ie September) of 1988.

## And finally...

I spotted this while visiting a car auction in Scotland a few years ago. It was in the car park, and it had only just been resurfaced at, I'm sure, massive cost. Someone clearly thought an aerosol can of silver paint was a more 'cost effective' way of smartening up tatty alloys than spending twenty quid on a set of replacements. They clearly didn't, though, think it worth investing in anything to protect the surface.

There is, though, a serious point here; overspray can get anywhere and everywhere, and while whoever did this probably didn't think (or care..) about the consequences, you probably don't want a mess like this on your driveway...





# Family WAGON

**Craig** finds out yet again that an S124 is never quite full, no matter what you pack into it.

**W**ith family based in Cheshire, I decided to tie in last month's Classic Touring trip up to St Helen's with a break for the family to see my mother-in-law.

Travelling with three children isn't a task to be done lightly, especially not when mother-in-law gifts you a load of garden plants to take home as well, but the E220 proved, yet again, that there's no such thing as 'full' for an S124 wagon – three kids, five people's luggage, the aforementioned garden plants and even a television set were stashed in the boot without a hint of

trouble, while the Cheetham boys, Ben, Ollie and Tommy, all still had plenty of space in the back.

However, the trip up north wasn't without event – the E220 suffered its first failure in my two-year ownership. Fear not – it was mechanically perfect, not even using a drop of oil in the 500-mile round trip, but when I went to get my sat nav unit out of the centre console the sliding handle came loose. When that's all that goes wrong with a 22-year old car with almost 203,000 miles recorded on the clock (and probably a few more, if you look at the discrepancies on the MoT history)

that's truly nothing.

Indeed, of all the cars I own (and there are quite a few) this is the one I'd trust the most if I had to undertake a long journey at short notice. It never fails to start, is wonderfully relaxing to drive, and on my recent 500-mile jaunt returned an impressive 37mpg. For a car of its size, I think that's pretty amazing.

The E220 has also fallen victim to a news story we broke a few issues ago, about a rise in thefts of Mercedes-Benz bonnet badges. Whilst the car was parked up in a Macclesfield side street, some unsavoury individual





## Craig Cheetham

**Mercedes E220**  
Mileage: 202,910  
xxxxxx instalment

took it upon him or herself to try and remove the three-pointed star from my bonnet.

Thanks to the way in which it is attached, using a series of cables so it can fold out of the way in an impact, they failed to remove it at all, but they had partially levered the back part of the badge away and twisted the emblem itself.

Luckily, it took nothing more than some superglue and patience to put it back to looking just right, but nonsensical, mindless vandalism is a pet hate of mine, especially when someone causes deliberate damage to someone's clearly cherished classic car. I was one of the lucky ones, though – poor Sam Mace, a fellow Mercedes Driver contributor, had the misfortune to report on a far more traumatic experience two months ago. Stop being horrible to each other, people, as it's not cool...

My next job for the 124 is to try and wire in the original Blaupunkt CD player, which I found in a box in the boot, to see if it works, as the previous owner had a Bluetooth head unit fitted, and I also need to change the driver's side front wing, which is the only area of rust on the car. I was going to do this weeks ago, but the problem with the car is that nothing really goes wrong with it, so I rarely need to dedicate a day to fettling it like I do with some of my other vehicles.

I thought I might have some work to do when I took it for its second MoT in my two-year ownership last week, but yet again it sailed through with no problems, picking up an advisory for some wear to the inner edge of one tyre. When that's all the MoT man picks up on for a car that has, quite literally, travelled to the moon, it's a huge tribute to the legendary Mercedes-Benz build quality, of which the W/S/C124 series were probably the very last cars to benefit from.

But that's fine, as I don't need a newer car. I like this one just the way it is...







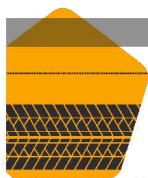
# *Benz* DOWN UNDER

**Simon Inglis** needed a new Mercedes when he moved to Australia.

This C180 has served him well since.







# Simon Inglis

**Mercedes C180 Classic**  
245,017 km  
First instalment

**O**ur base-model Mercedes C Class (for the Australian market anyway) bought for small used car money was always going to be a risk. For well over a year and 14,000 kilometres she has served us pretty well yet not quite faultlessly. After returning to Australia in late 2016, I had my mind set on a late model W202 as my R-reg C200 of that shape had only finally met its end at some 214,000 miles after requiring expensive MOT repairs. That trusty old banger was now my low budget yardstick. Yes a great expectation for any older car let alone a cheap Mercedes Benz in Australia.

Yet the, to me at least, very attractive W203 shaped C180 Classic came onto my radar.

In the years I was away used car values have decreased to a great extent in Australia. The better weather in most of the country (certainly not where I live however!), results in far less rot than in Blighty. Thus older cars are a more viable option than on the UK's salted roads. Yet heavy depreciation is now the norm here making any ordinary car over ten years of age rather low in value. Good news for the likes of us who avoid 'toybotarus' in favour of more interesting yet used machinery! However at nearly twenty years of age perfectionists expectations are clearly to be avoided.

As we have bought a house about 200 kilometres west of Melbourne the C180 has done the Melbourne commute as well as the westward Adelaide long-haul of some 1,200 return kilometres. Yet since adding a turbo diesel Saab to our fleet I've made a conscious decision to keep our little C off the long-haul routes of late. So it's been a few trips to Ballarat (200 kilometres for a round trip) but mostly the school run and local shops.

The W203 has a somewhat deservedly dodgy reputation, yet given the phonebook sized log of



receipts that came with her last year I think I was fortunate enough to have sourced a car that has been loved. My nastiest experience was the driveshaft rumble after the rear flex disc failure had thrown one of the 3 retaining bolts somewhere onto the road. What at first seemed to doom the car to the wrecking yard was a replacement flex disc and a \$60 bolt from a Canberra based supplier. My recommendation is to raise the car and have a good look as those flex discs are a common fail but if caught early you won't require a new drive shaft. Other problems include the need for a laser wheel alignment to try to reset the ESC, the warning light appeared on my dash immediately after the flex disc repair and most blogs indicate I've either knocked a sensor out or the 4 wheels need to be re-lined up. I have a slightly offset steering wheel so the alignment job will be done in the next days.

The most annoying thing about the old Merc remains my wheels. Cheap and nasty plastic rims do nothing for any car let alone a W203. So I've started spending quality time on Gumtree to source some genuine period alloys, and they don't need to be refurbished as my car is far from being a pristine example!

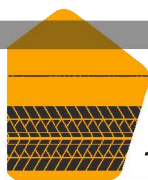
Having said that at ten paces she looks very nice and I am certainly a big fan of the W203. This South African

built car has somehow avoided the tin worm so common in turn-of-the-century Mercs. There are car park nicks aplenty yet not a spot of rust, every panel remains straight and the paint true. Is this a fluke?!

When I bought the C I'd hoped any registrable 17/18 year old Mercedes from that era should by now have had most of its gremlins sorted. The simple and admittedly underpowered M111 engine is sweet and mellow with a reputation for reliability, and the 5-speed auto was, in its time and to this day, a nice gearbox. Changes are still very smooth with no clunking between ratios.

As well as the 'either you love or hate it' W203 shape I'm still endeared with the efficient interior and the thoughtful touches that basic modern cars don't have. Whether it's rain sensing wipers, automatic headlamps or self-activated locking to the precise digital speedometer (essential in a country festooned with overly-zealous speed cameras seemingly at every turn).

The W203 was bought out of necessity, as a cheap gamble. In its 18-months or so on fleet it's almost always been greatly reliable. After the ESC warning is dealt with (warning lamps being a personal hate!) I'll be making a very dedicated effort to source those rims!



*Andy Jones*

# Your MERCES

A dabble with a W123 has led to a fleet  
of Mercs for **Andy Jones!**

I bought my first Mercedes, a 1983 W123 230E saloon just two years ago, a nice car but it needed improving with a new front wing and bonnet due to rust! All was well, then at the end of May 2017 I saw a 1992 W124 230E saloon for sale locally – a very late 8 valve car, registered around the time the 16v engines were launched. As an earlier car, it doesn't have the wiring issues later models have, which is one of the things which made this car appealing. I went to view it and it was a great car in lovely condition with about 122k miles on the clock, drove like new so I bought it! I preferred the 124 as it was nicer to drive and in much better condition than the 123. I sold my W123 around a year ago – it was a nice car, it just wasn't what I wanted when I had the W124.

I have a really mint R129 2000 SL320 Edition arriving soon, just a few weeks away. Having well and truly caught the Mercedes bug I sold my everyday car and went looking for a more modern Mercedes I could use every day. I found a very useful 2002 C270 CDI Elegance estate for sale locally, and it really took my fancy! I've bought it, and will be using it as my main car.

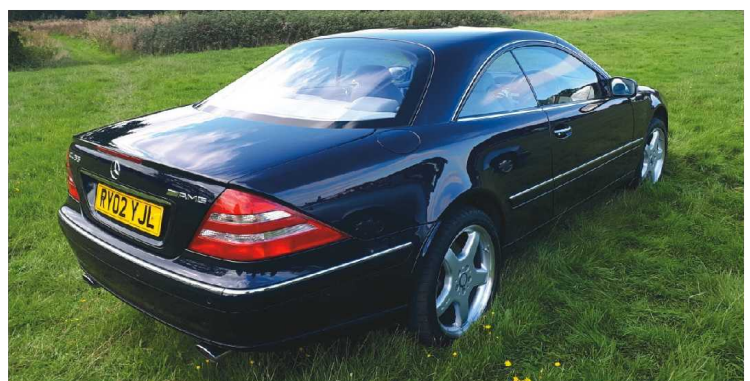
But then out of the blue a couple

"At the end of May 2017 I saw a 1992 W124 230E saloon for sale locally I preferred the 124 as it was nicer to drive and in much better condition than the 123."

of weeks ago I saw advertised locally an amazing 2002 CL55 AMG in stunning condition with just 58k miles on the clock, finished in a wonderful combination of Tanzania blue with grey leather interior. A wonderful car and very well cared for by the previous owner, I'd been admiring it at classic car shows for several years and never expected I'd own it one day. It has to be the best car I've owned yet, seems I'm getting rather fond of Mercedes-Benz cars!



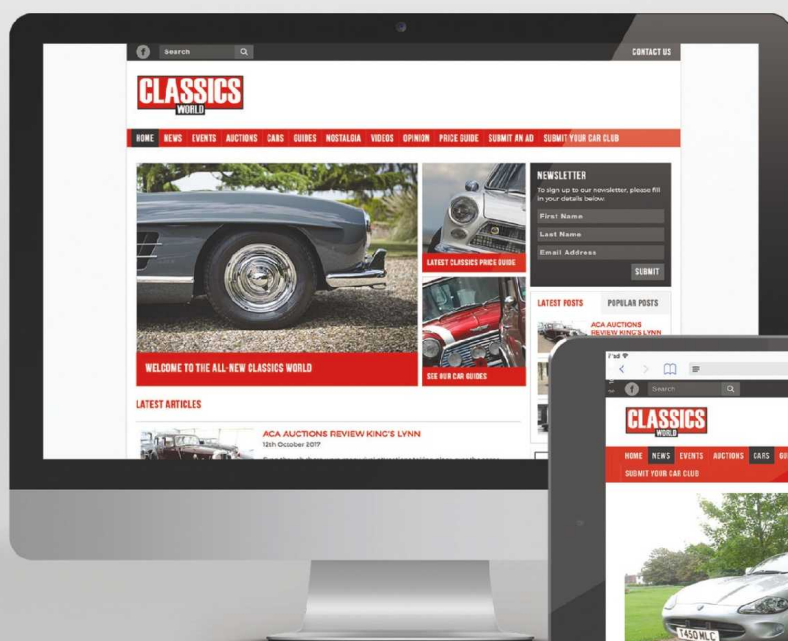




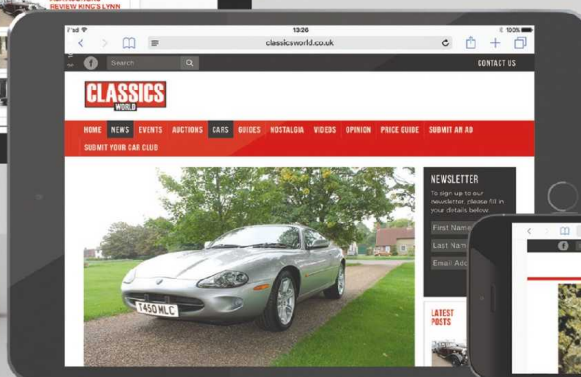


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**Jack O'Brien** *Club Editor*

# CLUB NEWS

E-class and 190E day reports - just a few left for the season!

**W**e are down to the last few shows and national events of the calendar as September draws to a close, but late August and September have provided some stand out events, such as E Class Day at Burghley House and the R129 Model event on 9th September.

I attended E Class day, which saw models from W123 to W213 parked outside the house. Of special note was one of the 29 UK delivered W124 500Es, a rare car indeed. Its owner has had it from new and upgraded from a 300E after seeing the V8 Über saloon in the window of a London dealership. The 500E is a landmark car for Merc, and with so few officially imported to this country in period, that one is rather special indeed. A W211 E55 won car of the show, and it would be hard to argue with the judges' decision as it was presented to an exceptionally high standard. An overlooked car, the E55, but a snoop at the classifieds unearths some well cared for and low mileage examples for sale in the low teens. A lot of car for the money, providing you get one with sorted ABC suspension... We went along in Donald the 300D, which you have read about on page 36 and a highlight of the day for us was meeting Sven on the streets of Stratford as we were leaving, with his Petrol Blue W123 230E, which he and his girlfriend are doing a 4000km tour of Europe, starting in Berlin. It's not often you see a W123 on the road any more, but to



**"The event attracted over 40 W201s and other Mercedes models."**

bump in to a German car and stop for a chat with the owner was a real treat.

Outside the Mercedes Owners club, we are pleased to report on the September meeting of the 190.co.uk W201 owners group on September 2nd. Organised again by

**Above:** Lee Moulson's 190E in good company

Lee Moulson, the event attracted over 40 W201s and other Mercedes models. I was unable to go along, but if previous meets are anything to go by, I'm sure it was a great day with lots of friendly people; all passionate about their Benzes. I can't recommend this forum enough and urge any W201 owners to sign up and introduce yourself!

We are preparing for the last national event of the year, W124 day, which is the coming weekend as I write this, and the York Rally on the 23rd, which is the sign off of the show season. As I sign off, I should note that photographs in the last issue were supplied by Ian Keers of the Mercedes Benz Club, and that owing to an oversight he wasn't credited in print at the time. ■





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## 190

### 190E



**1979, 138,000 kms, \$60,000.** Original condition owned by original purchaser until 2016. This 2nd owner has rebuilt the front end, new fuel pumps, new aircon compressor, new air cells, drives brilliantly. Please call +61416 207031, Sydney. 4703

## 230

### 230



**84,000 miles, £8,995.** Finished in ivory pearl with terracotta trim. Full Main Dealer History, 20 stamps in the book last done at 81,00, now done 84,000 miles. Hard to find nice original 123 like this. Please call 01485 541526, Norfolk. (T) 3940

## 350

### 350 SL



**1980, £15,490.** Good Condition, Mercedes Red. Last owner had car for 18 years, hence the condition. The car has been restored 12 years ago, Original interior and Carpets. Nice Soft top in good Condition and nice Hard Top in good condition, Runs very well. Please call 07958 431991, Hounslow. 4845

## E CLASS

### E 200



**1995, 169,777 miles, £3,800.** White. MoT 11 MONTHS. Drives lovely with cloth interior, 7 seats and central locking. Tow bar, sun roof and roof bars. Please call 01897 440615, Middx. 4696

## S CLASS

### 60 AMG



**1997, 155,000 miles, £29,995.** Metallic grey with charcoal leather. AMG styling including front spoiler and side skirts and the correct AMG 18 inch bolted alloys. Cruise control, heated memory orthopaedic seats, electric windows, and naturally air-condition. Please call 01798 874477. 1243

## SL

### 300SL



**1992, 68,000 miles, £9,750.** Finished in astral silver with dove gray hide interior, rear seats, headrests, hard and soft tops, light up vanity mirrors, power windows, power hood, air bags, abs, alloys, stereo system, only Please call 01322 669081 (T). 3168

## 320



**1995, 59,000 miles, £11,450.** Azure blue, beige leather, partwood steering wheel. Climate control, electric seats, 4 new tyres, new battery fsh, 11 dealer stamps, 2 keys and 12 months MoT. Please call 07902 032101, Nottinghamshire. 2895

## 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

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ENJOYING YOUR MERCEDES

# BRITAIN

## By Benz: *Pt 8.*

Sam Mace takes a trip from Sandbanks to Salisbury

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ENJOYING YOUR MERCEDES











## Classic Touring

Words and pics:  
Sam Mace



**O**ur starting point is Sandbanks beach, Dorset. A peninsula crossing Poole harbor, Sandbanks is famed for its beautiful sunsets and exclusive properties. What better place to enjoy the last of Summer, and what better car to do it in, than our E220 coupe?

Looking at it through the windows of Sandbanks Beach Cafe, I wondered how long I could draw out my time with the car before returning it to the editor. No matter what the weather is doing, it's a car that always make it feel like summer. The cafe provided a good cup of coffee today's adventure, and it was going to be needed. We've got Bournemouth and Salisbury to visit, plus a couple of little surprises tucked away - not that we were in a rush to get away from Sandbanks.

For one weekend in July the beach plays host to the British Beach Polo Championship, when it becomes noisy, crowded and choked with traffic, but for the rest of the year it's fairly quiet, in comparison to neighboring Bournemouth. In fact, we've practically had the sandy, immaculately clean beach to ourselves. It was here we were offered a chance to sample the high life, by playing golf by, at the bargain price of £6 (if you're willing to swap the fairway for a plastic castle on the crazy golf course).

If crazy golf is a too vaudeville for you, Brownsea Island offers thrills of a more intellectual nature. Although you'll need to take the ferry to cross the water, you just as well while you're here.

This small island is the birthplace of the Scouting movement, now operated by the Natural Trust, and is home to Brownsea Castle. Originally constructed by Henry VIII, it passed through many phases of ownership throughout the centuries, before being bought by the National Trust in a state of disrepair in the sixties and restored.

Our next stop was Bournemouth. Driving away from the beach (following signs for Lilliput), we

turned right onto Haven Road, and followed the road all the way down to Branksome Beach car park, where Haven Road eventually became Pinecliff Road. If you like, you can take the opportunity to stop and explore the conservation area of Branksome Chine Gardens from here.

To go straight to Bournemouth, carry on past Branksome Beach car park, staying on Pinecliff Road and go onto Western Road, which is the 6th turning on your right. This is the road that leads to Bournemouth. It winds all the way down to the Bournemouth International Centre (the BIC), snaking past beachside tower blocks and numerous hotels clustered by the seafront.

Parking in Bournemouth can be very expensive, but it is possible to park your car at fairly reasonable rates, provided you know where to look. Just before the road slopes down a hill towards the BIC, you will see Beacon Road on your right. Follow it all the way to the bottom, and Beacon Road pay and display is on your right. In Summer, parking for up to two hours costs £5.00, falling to £3.00 in Winter. It makes a great starting place to explore Bournemouth from.

Across the road from the car park is a narrow, steep track that leads to West Undercliff Promenade. If you're able bodied and not wearing your best clothes it's possible to walk down it, just make sure you have sensible shoes on! Those feeling less intrepid can walk past the BIC, sticking to the pathway that leads to the beach and Bournemouth Pier.

From the promenade, you can enjoy 11 miles of award winning sandy beaches. A Tripadvisor pole placed Bournemouth Beach as the fifth best beach in the whole of Europe, and fourteenth in the world, so be sure to go and enjoy it while you're there.

Bournemouth Pier can be accessed for a small charge, and it is worth walking the length of it to enjoy the view of the Dorset coastline.













city centre. To reach it, keep following signs for the A36, and take the first exit off the Castle Roundabout, onto Castle Street. The car park is on your right, the entrance opposite a bus garage.

From here we're perfectly placed to see the best of Salisbury. Despite being steeped in history, Salisbury is probably viewed by most as a nothing more than a shopping destination. Entirely forgivable, given that one of the city's best-known landmarks serves as a monument to the sale of goods: the Poultry Cross marks the former site of Salisbury's poultry market, and can be found on the junction where Barnard Street meets Culver Street. Chartered in 1227, the market still takes place on Tuesday and Saturdays. While you may struggle to find any poultry, it's still a fine place to buy a memento of your trip. From food to books to hardware, there isn't much which can't be purchased from Salisbury market. But don't worry if there's no market on when you're there: there's still plenty to do, buy and here. If you still want to make a shopping trip of it, there's good old fashioned department stores to visit, book shops to browse and plenty of high end clothing outlets.

It would be pointless though, to go to Salisbury and not visit its most famous landmark: Salisbury Cathedral.



Completed at around the same time as The Poultry Gate, although somewhat grander, you don't have to be of any particular faith to appreciate it, just have a healthy interest in history. Its houses what it believed to be one of the oldest working clocks in the world, as well as an original copy of the Magna Carta.

Guided tours take place throughout the day, and for a fee, the "Tower Tour" will take you up 332 steps to view Salisbury from the foot of the cathedral's spire.

Once we'd seen enough of Salisbury, it was time for our final stop of the day. We retraced our footsteps back to the Castle Roundabout, and took the second exit, following the A345.

Old Sarum Castle is an English Heritage site less than three miles away from the centre of Salisbury,

and offers the chance to see some stunning views of the area, if you didn't make the tower tour.

Easily accessible by turning left off the A345, Old Sarum Castle is an Iron Age hill fort, which makes Salisbury Cathedral and its locale look modern in comparison. Among the castle's grounds is what remains of Salisbury's "old" Cathedral, which was consecrated in 1092. Little more than a collection of low walls, it was demolished in 1220, and many of the bricks were recycled to construct the "new" Cathedral, that we visited earlier.

With sore feet and a strong urge to down a cup of tea, we started to head for home from here. But if you fancy getting a little bit more out of your day, Stonehenge is a twenty minute drive away, just off of the nearby A303. ■





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